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The New York 'Sharp'; OR, THE FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

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CHAPTER I. THE DARK ANGEL.

ON the night of September 20th, 1852, a violent storm swept over the great city of New York. It was the beginning of the "line gale"—that storm so terrible in its nature, so destructive to human life along our northern rock-bound coast.

The rain poured in torrents upon the ever-dirty streets of the great metropolis; the thunder rolled in heavy peals along the heavens, and the lightning flashed its vivid fires over the rooftops and in the almost deserted streets.

The lights flashing from the windows upon the gloom of the night—for it was scarcely nine,

and the denizens of the great city do not retire early—seemed to mock the storm that raged so terribly without.

Regardless of the storm, come with us, dear reader. We will take our way—not to Fifth avenue, the abode of gilded luxury and oft of festering crime—but to Forsyth street, the home of the sons of toil, the honest middle classes, the pillars and bulwarks of our Republic.

We stop before a building six stories in height; the lights are flashing from every window; all give signs of occupation and of life. This building is a tenement-house, each floor of which is occupied by two or more families—sometimes the occupants, whose families are small, will turn an honest penny by sub-leasing a room.

We will leave the storm and gloom and enter the house. Ascending the stairs, we will enter the first door we come to on the landing.

We find a small kitchen, ill-furnished. Although winter is fast approaching, there is no stove in the open fire-place: nothing but a small round furnace of burning charcoal, fit only for preparing food.

Another glance around the room, and that

glance tells we are in the abode of death—of death surrounded by misery.

Upon a torn and squalid bed lies the lifeless form of a woman—not old, but young, although the sunken cheeks, the pallid face, and the wide-open, straining, staring eyes give her a look of age far beyond her years.

By the side of the dead woman nestles a babe scarcely a year old. The child sleeps soundly by the side of its dead mother; not old enough to comprehend its loss.

The little room has one other occupant—a boy some twelve years of age; although his features—like his parent's now lying lifeless upon the floor—being pinched by want, make him seem much older. The story of this little family, whose mother has been stricken down by the bolt of the Dark Angel, is but the oft-told tale.

A village mechanic, with his wife and boy, forsakes his happy country home, and enters the whirl and bustle of the great metropolis. Years pass on; the simple countryman, unused to the snares of the world, falls an easy prey to the wiles that beset him on every side. He becomes a drunkard, neglects his work; step by step he goes down the ladder of degrada-



"I'LL BE EVEN WITH YOU FOR THIS NIGHT'S WORK!"

tion, until, at last, he yields up his life to a stab inflicted by one of those ruffians of the knife who haunt the low liquor-saloons of New York. He dies, leaving his wife with two children—a son of eleven, and an infant of barely a year old—to fight her way through the world. Brave, true little woman that she was, she did not shrink from the task. She took in washing, went out sewing, and so fought the wolf from the door. Furnishing the front room of her apartments as well as she was able, she succeeded in letting it to a young lady—a music-teacher, so she said—for enough to pay all her rent. Her boy took to selling papers, and being naturally a sharp, active lad, he contributed considerably to the support of the household.

It was a hard struggle for the poor little woman, and at last she sickened and died, leaving her two children to the cold mercies of the world.

Thus it is, that on the night of September 20th, while the storm howled and raged without, Daniel Catterton, the newsboy, sat in the little room, gazing wistfully upon the face of his dead mother, and wondering what would become of him and the infant that slept so calmly beside the corpse.

Daniel was fully old enough to comprehend his desolation.

"What's going to become of us?" he said, addressing his conversation to the sleeping babe. "Blest if I know," he continued, answering his own question. "If I only had myself to look after, I wouldn't care; but that baby—ah!" and he heaved a deep sigh, as if oppressed by the weight of responsibility, "that's what gets me. I can get along myself; I can bunk anywhere, but the baby can't. Some chaps, now, would run off and leave it to take care of itself, but I ain't one of that kind. You're my relation, old gal; I'm your mother now, an' I'm blest if I don't stick by you, so help me Bob!" and he waved his hand patronizingly toward the baby. Then a brilliant idea seemed to strike the boy.

"If I could only get some one to take care of it 'bout four or five years; wouldn't that be just old king! Then it would be big enough to leave alone, an' I could look after it, high! But where am I going to get any one to take care of it? If I had the ding-bats, now, it would be all right, Crickey!" and sharp Daniel clapped his hand upon his knee, vigorously as another brilliant idea struck him. "That gal in the front room has got lots of money; she had a roll of bills as big as my fist when I went for the rent last week. A high old music-teacher she is. Never goes out nor nothing; and then that Broadway sport' with the kids an' cane that comes to see her! Guess I'm fly!" and the boy winked one eye significantly. It was plainly evident that the street-life that young Catterton had led had made him old before his time.

"S'pose I goes in an' helps myself to that roll of bills?" and at the very thought the boy glanced around nervously as if afraid of being watched. "She can get plenty more. It'll save this little kid from starving. Blest if I don't do it!" and the boy shut his teeth together firmly. "The dogs take what comes in their way. I heard a feller say the other day as how the world owed us all a living; that kid ain't big enough to fight, so I'll fight instead. I know exactly where she keeps the 'spondulics,' cos I see'd her put the roll in the drawer. I've got the key of the door between. I'll watch her when she goes to bed, an' after she goes to sleep, I'll go for the roll. This little baby shan't starve while it has got a big brother."

Noiselessly the boy got up, crossed the apartment and entered the little bedroom adjoining, carrying his chair with him. From the bedroom a door led into the front room that the poor widow had furnished and let to the music-teacher. Over the door was a transom of ground glass. A corner of one of the panes had been broken, leaving a small space through which one could command a view of the front room.

Placing an empty box on his chair, the boy mounted, and putting his eye to the hole, looked into the room.

We will follow his example.

The front room was comfortably furnished—evidently the occupant had added many articles of her own to the furniture she had hired. A bright fire blazed in the cheerful open stove. By the stove stood a little crib in which slept an infant, possibly a year old. By the door stood two people—a man and a woman. The man was young, probably about twenty-five, and from his dress and manner one could easily tell that he belonged to the upper class and basked in the smiles of fortune. The woman was small in figure, young in years, fresh and beautiful in face. She was a blonde, with mild blue eyes and silken golden hair.

"Must you go now?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," he answered. "I have to meet a friend on Broadway at a quarter-past nine."

"Will you come to-night, Loyal?"

"Yes, I'll be here about ten; I'll give you another hour before I go home," he said.

"I wish you could be with me more," she spoke, with a sigh. "I am so lonesome without you. The only consolation I have is to look

into Essie's face and try and detect a resemblance to yours."

"Ah, pet!" and he patted her cheek fondly; "the time will soon come when I can acknowledge you freely, before the whole world."

"When will the divorce be granted?"

"Within a week, my lawyers say; then I can openly make you my wife."

"I live in constant terror now," she said, and a shade passed over her face as she spoke; "if he should return and discover my retreat, he would kill me, or worse—would tear me from you."

"There is little danger. Poor girl, you have dared all for me; never mind, I have a whole lifetime to repay you in, and we'll be happy yet, as the song says."

"Suppose," she said, nervously, "that he should discover me, or that anything should happen, so that I should have occasion to send for you suddenly: I do not know your address, how then can I warn you?"

"I'll give it to you—got a card?" he answered.

"There are some in my work-basket," she said. Then she went to the table and took a card from it—a plain white card. On the card he wrote with his pencil, "No. 810 Fifth avenue," then gave the card into her hands.

"It's big enough for a dozen addresses," he said, laughing.

She read the address, and then mechanically turning the card over saw that it was a playing-card—one of the white-back kind so much in use by sporting men. The card was the ace of spades.

"Spades are trumps," he said, with a light laugh.

She shuddered; a presentiment of evil filled her soul.

"It's an evil omen," she said. "Spades are signs of disaster and death."

"In fortune-telling that bodes a coffin; but, pshaw! that's nonsense. Well, good-by, Christine. I'll be back about ten. Hearts are trumps with us, not spades."

And so with a farewell kiss upon the red lips held up so willingly to receive it, the young man left the room. As he passed down the stairs he almost ran over a man coming up; apologizing, he continued on, and entering the street he was soon lost to sight in the gloom.

In this world, life and death are sometimes so evenly balanced that the weight of a single hair will determine the scale. That man that Loyal Tremaine ran against on the stairs of the tenement-house would have stricken him dead at his feet had he known who he was, instead of passing him by with a courtly bow.

After Loyal's departure, Christine seated herself at the table, still gazing intently upon the card which seemed to her a messenger of evil.

The boy-watcher at the broken window, who could hear as well as see, was not well pleased with the thought that he should have to wait till midnight before he could make his raid on the roll of bills which was to serve for the support of the "little kid." He was about to descend from his spying position, when a knock at the door brought Christine to her feet, and caused him to remain, with his eye to the hole in the transom.

Christine opened the door, and a man walked into the room.

With a cry of horror, the woman recoiled from him.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINT OF THE LIGHTNING.

The stranger closed the door, turned the key in the lock, then confronted the trembling Christine, who, pale with terror, sunk almost fainting into a chair.

There was nothing in the man's appearance to excite terror. He was a stoutly-built person, probably thirty or thirty-five years old; bronzed in face and with a sailor-like look. He was dressed neatly in dark clothes, and wore a cloak over his shoulder.

The stranger gazed upon the trembling woman with a mournful look.

"Christine, I have found you at last," he said, slowly.

"Oh, Heaven!" she murmured. "I feared this!"

"You did?" the stranger asked, and a peculiar look shone in his dark eyes. "You feared my coming. These are bitter words for a husband to hear coming from his wife's lips. Two years ago I left you in your home in New Bedford to be gone three years on a whaling-voyage. My ship is lost and I return to my home and wife a year before my time. I return, and what do I find? Can you tell me?"

The woman did not answer, but sat like a statue, with her gaze fixed upon the carpet.

"You do not answer; then I will tell you! Oh! the tone of agony that there was in that man's voice as he uttered the simple sentence. "I found a home deserted—the marriage-vows broken, and desolation for me hereafter in this world. You were gone, Christine—fled with a villain. You left no clew by which I could follow you, but I guessed that here in this great city, the whirlpool of crime, I should find you. I came here—employed the detective officers,

but the search was useless. Then I, myself, like the red Indian, resolved to track you out. For a long time I have wandered up and down in this great sink of iniquity, have visited all the theaters, all places of public resort, searching for one object only—your face. To-day I came past this house on the opposite side of the street. I saw you at the window; at last I had found you. And yet, since that time I have been nerving myself to meet you—trying to keep down the devil in my heart that bids me to kill you."

Trembling with fright, Christine sprung to her feet; a deadly terror was in her soul. She read danger in the fierce dark eyes of Walter Averill, her sailor-husband.

"Hear me, Walter," she murmured, with blanched lips. "I have sinned—I know it—I am conscious of it! But no being in this world falls without a reason; then hear mine. I never loved you; my parents forced me to marry you because you were rich. You were all to me that a man should be to a woman, and yet from the hour that I stood by your side at the altar, I loathed you. It is bitter for me to speak these words, it must be bitter for you to hear them; but you must know the truth. The man that I fled with loves me—I love him, love him better than I do my own life. He is not a villain, but means me well. I have applied for a divorce; in a week it will be granted; then he will make me his wife."

"His wife!" and there was menace in the tones of the sailor's voice as he spoke; "um—perhaps! What is his name?" Averill's voice was cold and calm as he asked the question.

"I will not tell you," faltered the trembling lips of the woman.

"I will find him, if I have to seek him in the depths of hell!" said the sailor, in icy tones.

Christine's heart sank within her at the threat.

Then Averill's eyes fell upon the infant sleeping in the crib. His features were for a moment distorted with sudden pain.

The sailor advanced to the crib; quick as thought the mother snatched the child in her arms and hugged it to her breast, as though to shield it from him.

"His child?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured, and quickly retreating to the window, threw it up as if to call for assistance.

"Do not fear," he said. "I will harm neither you nor the infant; but for him, let him look to himself." The tone boded danger to the absent man.

Then the keen eyes of the sailor fell upon the card upon the table. He saw the man's handwriting, eagerly he caught it up.

"810 Fifth avenue!" that is his address, is it not?" he cried, with a gleam in his dark eyes, approaching the almost fainting woman.

Christine strove to speak, but her tongue seemed glued to the roof of her mouth; she could not articulate a word.

What was the storm raging so wildly without to the tempest in the soul of the sailor husband?

He turned the card over as if in search of further proof; the ace of spades stared him in the face.

"The omen of evil! fit it is for such a purpose. Do you see what it is?" And the sailor, with the card in his hand, approached the shrinking woman. He thrust the card to her till it rested on the shoulder of the babe sleeping on her breast.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the room, the electric fluid darted through the window into the apartment; a terrific peal of thunder followed.

The sailor was stricken senseless to the floor. Christine stood motionless by the window like a marble statue.

The watcher at the transom stared upon the scene, his eyes dilated with horror.

In a few minutes the sailor recovered from the shock. He rose to his feet and approached the woman. She did not stir. She was dead—killed by the stroke of lightning. Its vivid marks were upon her pale face. The babe still slept on its dead mother's breast. The playing-card, too, had disappeared, but in its place where it had fallen upon the infant's shoulder, the night-dress had been scorched and burnt away, and there on the white skin appeared in bluish tint the ace of spades; the print of the lightning.

Horror-stricken for a moment the sailor gazed upon the work of death.

"It is the act of heaven!" he cried; "her crime is punished without mortal aid. The child of sin too is branded with an ineffaceable mark. Poor babe, my vengeance does not extend to you; but for him, the author of this wrong, I'll have his life, although I swing for it the next moment. He may return here; for a time I'll wait."

Then, taking the sleeping babe from the arms of its dead mother, he placed it in its crib. The body of his erring wife, the hapless Christine, he placed upon the bed. Tears filled the eyes of the iron-willed sailor as he gazed upon the face of the woman that he had once loved with all the passion of his being.

"May her sins be pardoned hereafter," he

said, with a longing look at the still face. Then he seated himself at the table.

"Now let him come; it only needs his death to complete the catalogue of horrors. The storm rages without, human passions within; it is a night fitted for bloody deeds."

CHAPTER II.

LOYAL TREMAINE'S VOW.

THE boy, Dan Catterton, at the transom had watched the tragedy with staring eyes. He heard plainly the threats of Averill, and knew, of course, that he waited for the return of Loyal Tremaine; and having heard that gentleman say he would come again at ten, the idea was not slow to come to him that if he remained at his post he would probably witness another tragedy. Then another thought flashed upon his mind. What if he should go and warn the first of the danger that threatened him at the hands of the second comer; would not the service be worth a large reward? In his own mind the newsboy instantly decided that it would be. So he resolved to lie in wait for the man who was to return at ten, and inform him of the danger that he would incur should he proceed up-stairs.

Carefully Dan descended from his perch, passed through the rooms, and after a glance at the sleeping "kid"—as he had affectionately termed his young relative—to see if sleep was still upon the infant, he passed out into the entry. He descended the stairs and took up his position just outside the front door. Luckily the rain was beating upon the opposite side of the street, else young Catterton would soon have been wet to the skin, for he was but thinly clad.

"I'm in for that roll of bills," said the boy to himself, as he waited, shivering, in the doorway; "that air kid ain't a-goin' to starve, not if I knows. This swell ought to come down handsome too; for if he was to go up-stairs, that sailor fellow would jest chaw his ear right off."

The boy did not have long to wait, for soon, out of the gloom and darkness of the night, came the stranger that he had seen depart an hour before. He knew him instantly, from the short cloak which Loyal wore upon his shoulders.

"Say, mister!" cried the boy, clutching at Tremaine's cloak as he was about to pass him.

"Well?" said Loyal, pausing in astonishment, and looking at the imp-like boy by his side.

"That woman's husband has come, and he's a-waiting for you up-stairs to knock off the whole top of your head," cried the newsboy, breathlessly.

"What?" cried Tremaine, in amazement.

"I tell yer that gal's husband has come—Mister Walter—the gal's dead—killed by lightning, an' he's a-waitin' up-stairs to go for you."

Convinced that the boy had indeed something important to communicate, Tremaine—at the newsboy's suggestion—walked with him down the street toward Grand, while Catterton gave a detailed account of all that had happened, merely suppressing his motive for playing the listener.

"Great Heavens! Christine dead!" said Loyal, horror-stricken.

"That's so, 'cos the man put her on the bed an' I heard him say so."

"And the child?"

"Oh, she's all right."

"Not injured?"

"No, siree!" the boy answered, and he had just opened his mouth to tell of the strange mark that the lightning had blazoned upon the shoulder of the infant, when Loyal interrupted him with a question.

"Boy, this man, you say, is waiting in the room for my return?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you like to earn a hundred dollars?"

"Would I? Just try me!" and the boy's eyes sparkled with delight.

"If you will bring me that infant that you saw with the lady in the room, I'll give you one hundred dollars."

"If it wasn't for that feller there, I could do it just as easy as not," said the boy, thoughtfully.

"Can you not think of some excuse for getting possession of the child?" Loyal asked.

"Crickey!" cried Catterton, in glee; "I've got it. I'll go in as if I come from you to the lady, for to say as how you couldn't come back to-night. In course he'll want to know where I got the message, an' I'll say that you're eatin' oysters in a saloon in the Bowery, an' in course, he'll come after you—leave the baby, and I'll gobble it—ain't that bully?"

"I think it will do," Tremaine replied.

"See here, boss!" cried the boy, suddenly, "that feller read the ace of spades that you wrote your address on; so he knows where you live."

"The devil!" cried Loyal, in vexation.

"That's so, boss; I heard him read it."

"I shall have to leave New York, then, for the present," murmured Loyal to himself. "Well, I can take the infant with me, and find it a good home somewhere. All the love I bore to Christine—poor girl—I will transfer to her child—our child."

"You'll give me a hundred dollars?" asked the boy.

"Yes; if you bring me the child," answered Loyal.

"I'll do it, if it takes the heels right off my boots," cried the newsboy. "Say, boss, just you go and stand in a doorway on t'other side of the street, and I'll fetch the baby to you."

Tremaine took the station assigned to him, and the newsboy departed on his mission.

We will now return to Walter Averill, whom we left seated in the room of the ill-fated Christine, waiting for the man whom he intended to kill.

Barely five minutes did the sailor remain quiet, then springing to his feet he began to pace the room as though walking on the quarter-deck of his vessel.

"He may not come," he cried, impatiently; "it is late; he may not come to-night. Why should I not seek him in his Fifth avenue mansion? that was the number of it on the card I am sure. But stay!" he exclaimed, as a sudden thought flashed upon his mind, "I may find something here to aid me in my search."

A trunk was open in one corner of the room; eagerly the sailor searched it. He found a package of letters, but the letters of the man were signed simply with the letter L. Small chance was there of finding a clew as to who or what he was in that. But in one of the letters, inclosed in its folds, was a small daguerreotype, the likeness of a young and handsome man.

With fierce joy, Walter Averill gazed upon the features of the man who had wronged him, for he felt sure that this was the picture of the man that he had sworn to kill.

"Now I shall know him if we meet!" he cried, while thoughts of vengeance filled his mind. "I will not wait here longer, but I will go to him."

The sailor thrust the packet of letters into his pocket, and rising to his feet approached the crib in which the infant was calmly sleeping.

Walter Averill gazed upon the slumbering babe.

"The mark of shame is upon you, poor child, yet you are not to blame for the crime of your parents."

And, yielding to a sudden impulse, the sailor lightly touched his lips to the baby's cheek. The infant still slept on, little conscious that its mother lay in the cold embrace of death, or that it bore on its pearly shoulder the evil omen, the ace of spades.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

THE newsboy entered the tenement-house, and going to the door of the front room, knocked. No answer being made, he knocked again. Then, after a pause, he turned the handle of the door and opened it. The room was empty; the stranger was gone.

With a cry of delight the boy entered.

"Crickey!" he exclaimed, in glee, "I shall rake in that hundred, easy!"

The newsboy advanced at once to the little crib. The moment his eyes fell upon it a cry of surprise and disappointment burst from his lips.

Concealed by the shadow of the doorway, Loyal waited with impatience for the return of his messenger.

"Will he succeed?" he cried, as anxiously he waited. "The boy seems a shrewd rascal, and a hundred dollars is a large sum for one like him."

Fully a quarter of an hour Tremaine waited, and his patience was about exhausted, when the newsboy, bearing in his arms a bundle carefully wrapped up, came quickly down the street.

"Have you got the child?"

"All right, boss," answered the boy; "here she is." And he gave the bundle that was wrapped up in a shawl into Loyal's arms.

Uncovering the babe's head, Loyal saw that she was still sleeping. Then, from his pocket-book the gentleman took ten ten-dollar notes, and gave them to the boy.

"There's your hundred dollars," he said, as he handed the newsboy the bills. Then carefully sheltering the child under his cloak, Tremaine proceeded rapidly up Grand street to the Bowery.

For a moment the newsboy gazed at the ten bank-notes in speechless amazement.

"My!" he said, at last, when he had recovered a little from his astonishment, "why, I'm a millionaire, blow me tight, if I ain't! I guess the kid is all right now; but, thinking of that, I mustn't lose sight of this chap. He must have gobs of money to throw away a hundred dollars loose, like this. I'll just keep my eye on him, an' on the baby, too."

So down Grand street into the Bowery, the newsboy followed Loyal Tremaine.

In the Bowery, Tremaine took a Fourth avenue car. The newsboy, nothing daunted, kept close behind the car, although he was sometimes compelled to run at the top of his speed. The frequent halts of the car, though, to take up and leave passengers, gave him some breathing time.

At Union Square the car made quite a halt to take on a party of ladies. The halt was quite a relief to the newsboy, who had had a sharp run for about four blocks.

"He's goin' to Fifth avenue, I guess," said the boy, to himself, as he waited for the car to start again. "I'll find out where he lives, then I guess I'll try papers up this way, 'cos I'm bound to keep my eyes on that baby, as sure as my name is Dan Catterton."

We will leave Loyal with the child to pursue his way—he little dreaming that he was so closely followed, and turn our attention to the corner of Fifth avenue and Thirtieth street.

By the lamp-post at the corner stood two men muffled up in rough coats, with the collars pulled up to shield their throats. Rough old caps were pulled down over their eyes. The flickering rays of the gas threw but little light out on the darkness of the night, but by that little we can see that these two men—who are braving the rain and wind—are thick-set, muscular fellows—men with rough, bull-dog like features, and evil-looking eyes. They are good representatives of a large class that infest our great metropolis, who haunt Broadway, Fifth avenue and kindred streets by night, and by day are to be found in the low dens of Water street or in the underground drinking-saloons of the "bloody" Sixth Ward.

These men are the ones who, every now and then growing reckless and coming forth in their strength, produce that scene of terror which the morning journals so graphically term the "Reign of the Knife."

Of course these men stood at the corner of Fifth avenue and Thirtieth street at eleven at night in a rain-storm for no good purpose.

"I say, Jake," cried one of the two, suddenly, "isn't there some one coming along Thirtieth street?"

"Blazes!" responded the other, after listening for a moment, "so there is. Get your slung-shot ready! We may as well try our luck, 'cos it's gittin' late, an' we ain't likely to have many more chances."

"All right," said the other, and then the two sauntered slowly down the street toward Fourth avenue, from which direction the stranger was coming.

The two ruffians let their intended victim—who was closely wrapped in a short cloak, with a slouched hat pulled down over his eyes—pass them; then, quick as cats, they turned upon him. With a single blow of the slung-shot the stranger was knocked senseless to the pavement. The two ruffians proceeded at once to pillage their victim. Pulling open his cloak, a bundle was disclosed. Eagerly one of the ruffians opened it, and the cry of an infant wailed out shrilly on the night-air. Astonished, the ruffian gazed upon his prize. A piece of the orphan's dress had apparently been burnt away, and on the white skin of the shoulder shone the evil omen, the ace of spades.

CHAPTER V.

THE MISSING MAN.

"WELL, blast my eyes if it ain't a kid!" exclaimed the astonished rough.

"A babby!" ejaculated the second ruffian.

"That's so, a young 'un, too," replied the fellow who held the infant in his arms.

"Never mind the kid, go through the cove; the police may come down on us," said the second rough, who had dealt the terrible blow that had stretched the stranger senseless upon the wet pavement.

In obedience to the order, the kneeling ruffian laid the infant on the pavement, but the babe, who had been awakened by the rude shock of the fall, began to cry feebly.

"Choke the cursed brat!" cried the other ruffian, fiercely; "its squalling will bring the police down on us."

"You go through him, I'll hush the kid," replied his comrade.

Quickly the ruffian searched the victim, while the other took the baby, and nestling it inside his rough overcoat, hushed its sobs.

The watch and chain of the senseless man, his pocket-book, a seal-ring from his little finger, the gold studs and wrist-buttons of his shirt, all found their way into the capacious pocket of the night-bird. He searched his victim thoroughly, not omitting a single pocket. In the one in the breast of the stranger's body-coat he found a packet of letters. With an expression of disgust, he was about to toss them into the gutter, when his comrade, noticing the movement, stopped him.

"Hold on!" he cried; "what's that?"

"Nothing but a lot of blasted letters!" replied his companion, in disgust.

"Just what I want; hand 'em over."

"Eh?" said the other, in astonishment.

"I want 'em," again said the ruffian who held the child nestled under his coat.

"All right," said the other, giving the letters; "they ain't worth a curse."

"Have you got all the swag?"

"Yes."

"Let's be traveling then; the cops (police) may come down on us at any moment."

"They'll come soon enough, for the babby 'll

squeal like blazes when you put her down in the wet."

"Yes, but I ain't a-goin' to put her down," replied the ruffian.

"The blazes you ain't!" cried the other, in astonishment.

"That's so; but come, let's be off; I'll explain as we travel."

And then the two proceeded rapidly down the street to Fourth avenue; turning into the avenue, they headed City Hall-ward and walked swiftly on.

"What do you want the kid for?" asked the ruffian, who had been puzzling his dull brains to account for the strange action on the part of his comrade.

"Can't you guess?"

"Not a guess!" laconically replied the rough.

"S'pose you see in the paper in about three days a reward offered for the return of a lost baby, and no questions asked?"

"Oh!" and the ruffian gave vent to an exclamation of admiration, "I'm blest if you ain't a genius! Well, you are now, just! You nabs the kid, waits till the anxious parents offers a stunnin' reward, then you steps forward, pockets the blunt and gives up the babby."

"That's my game, exactly!"

"Yes, and you hold high, low, jack, with a chance to make game," said the rough, jocosely.

"Well, I think the kid will fetch a hundred or two, 'cos, you see, this ain't no poor man's child. He's one of the nobs, he is, the feller we laid out to-night, and he'll be pretty apt to come down handsomely for the infant."

"All right, my pippin; we're bound to win. Say halves, you know, on the kid question."

"Of course."

And leaving the two ruffians to pursue their way through the darkness and the storm to their obscure haunt in the heart of the "bloody" Sixth Ward, which holds in its midst such misery and crime, we will return to the man whom the ruffians had stricken senseless to the pavement with that terrible weapon the slung shot.

The victim had not moved since he fell. The blow had indeed been a terrible one, delivered with force enough to fell and stun an ox, let alone a man.

The storm howled with increased fury; the rain beat down upon the unprotected face of the senseless man, which looked pale and ghastly, like the face of one dead, in contrast to the dark pavement.

Fully an hour had passed since the ruffians had attacked their victim, yet still he lay motionless upon the cold stones, and showed no signs of returning animation.

The rap of a policeman's club at the corner of Fifth avenue and Thirtieth street rung out sharply amid the storm. The signal being answered, the policeman came leisurely down Thirtieth street. He had grown used to the storm and callous to the drenching rain.

As he came slowly down the street, his eyes fell upon the man stretched out at full length upon the sidewalk.

Supposing it to be some drunken wanderer overcome by liquor, the officer, kneeling by his side, endeavored to shake him into wakefulness; the attempt was a failure, however, and then the officer, examining more closely, perceived, to his horror, that dark drops of clotted blood were trickling slowly down on the side of the stranger's face. Quickly he removed the hat, and on the head saw the terrible wound that the slung-shot had produced.

The officer at once perceived that the man had been waylaid, and the pockets turned inside out told that he had also been robbed.

Quickly the policeman rapped for assistance, and being joined by a brother officer, together they carried the still senseless man to the nearest police station.

The officer in charge of the station searched the pockets of the wounded man in order to discover who and what he was. But the ruffians had not been bunglers at their trade, and not a single article had they left in the pockets of their victim.

"He ought to be sent to his friends, for he's badly hurt," said the officer, after he had completed his fruitless search. "He needs a doctor right away. But how the deuce can I send him home without knowing who he is or where he lives? He's evidently a gentleman, his clothes show that. If we keep him here he may die on our hands. Jim, you had better go and hunt up a coach somewhere, and we'll send him to Bellevue Hospital. When his friends miss him they will probably apply to the police, or he may be able to-morrow to tell who he is."

So the hack was got, and the wounded man taken to Bellevue Hospital. But far was he from being able on the morrow to tell who or what he was, as the officer had anticipated, for he awoke from his stupor in the wild delirium of a brain fever.

Incessant was the attention he received.

In the wild madness of the fever a single word was ever on the parched lips of the unknown.

That word was a name—a woman's name.

It was, "Christine!"

While the stranger lay tossing and moaning

in his narrow bed in the charity asylum, the family residing at No. 810 Fifth avenue, waited in vain for the return of one of their household, and that one was the pride of all, the only son.

The day passed on and still he came not. Fearful that harm had come to his boy, the aged father sought the counsel of the police. The detectives were put upon the scent, but 'twas all in vain; no trace could be discovered of the absent one.

Broken-hearted and bowed down with grief, the father returned to his home.

The next morning the papers contained a brief notice that Mr. Loyal Tremaine, residing at No. 810 Fifth avenue, had mysteriously disappeared, and that his family and friends feared that he had been foully dealt with, as he was known to have considerable money on his person when he left home; and the article closed with a description of the missing man.

The notice created no excitement outside of Tremaine's own circle of friends, for missing men are common in New York. Rarely do we take up a newspaper without seeing the brief notice, "Mr. — has not been seen since —, and fears are entertained of foul play, as he had considerable money on his person."

And while the search was hot for Loyal Tremaine, and the detectives were penetrating into the low dens of vice in quest of the missing man—the stranger in Bellevue Hospital, who had been crazed by a blow of the slung shot—with his head shaved, the mustache removed from his lip, and his cheeks whitened and hollowed by the drain of blood that had flowed from the gaping wound on his head, presented a terrible, yet pitiful aspect. So changed was he in looks from the handsome young man whom the roughs had assaulted, that it is doubtful if his own mother would have recognized her son.

Wildly raved he in the delirium of the fever, but the nurse could make nothing of the muttered sentences. One word alone was clear, and that word the woman's name, "Christine!"

Two days after the September day when the disappearance of Tremaine had been made public, two men sat at a table in a basement saloon in Chatham street; they were the two roughs that had figured in the Thirtieth street assault. One of them was attentively reading the *Herald*. Glancing over his shoulder, we see that his eyes are fixed on the column of personals.

"Anything 'bout the kid?" asked the other, draining his glass and swallowing his beer with great gusto.

"Not a word; we're bilked, partner," replied the rough, laying down the paper with a face that looked far from pleasant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GIRL THAT SWEPT THE CROSSING.

Now our story takes a jump forward sixteen years. We measure in a single sentence, New York city in the year 1868.

A calm, pleasant April night. We are standing at the lower end of the City Hall Park, facing toward the Battery.

It has been raining heavily for several days and the streets are muddy.

The crowd crossing Broadway, in front of the *Herald* building, are not, however, annoyed by the mud which should be on the crossing, for a slender young girl, broom in hand, has made the pathway clear, and thankfully she receives the pennies that are dropped into her outstretched hand by those who appreciate the labor that has enabled them to cross the muddy street without soiling their dainty boots.

The girl is dressed roughly in an old calico frock, patched with as many colors as Joseph's coat displayed. An old hood pulled closely down over her head almost hides her face.

It is something unusual to see a street-sweeper at work on lower Broadway after nightfall; for after the great life-stream from the stores and workshops, which begins about five and flows up Broadway till seven, ceases, there is, comparatively speaking, but few using lower Broadway as a thoroughfare.

The bells had just rung out nine on the evening air, yet still the street-sweeper swept the crossing, although her gains were few and far between.

We will approach and observe her more closely. Crossing Broadway we pass in front of the Astor House; our attention is attracted by two men who stand on the steps. As these two are representatives of a peculiar class that exist only in large cities, and probably flourish better in New York than elsewhere, we will stop and examine them.

One is a little fellow, hardly five feet in height, with a face like a fox's, expressive of low cunning; little sharp gray eyes; a turn-up nose; hair with a reddish tinge, cut close to his head, and the head as round as a bullet. In fine, the whole appearance of the man indicates not force, but trickery. He is dressed neatly in a brown business suit, and a silk hat, shining with a mirror-like gloss, showed his wish to be thought a gentleman. A flashy pin, that looked exceedingly like a diamond, if it was not one, sparkled in the snowy bosom of the ruffled shirt.

The second one of the two presented a marked contrast to the first; he was a slender-built

fellow about the medium height, the broad shoulders gave promise though of muscular force that few would suspect in one of such slender frame; a man that would weigh a hundred and forty-five, and yet would not be guessed to weigh over a hundred and twenty. And that hundred and forty-five not pounds of fat that impede a man's strength, tire his wind, and make each additional pound an additional disadvantage; but pounds of bone and muscle. Could we strip the dress of civilization from him we would expose a form that for muscular beauty would not have disgraced the Thracian gladiator who fought the Numidian lion, in the Roman arena, and dyed the yellow sands red with his blood. In face the young man was singularly beautiful—for there are beautiful men as well as beautiful women—fine golden hair curled in little crisp ringlets all over his shapely head. His eyes were dark-brown, full and large. The face almost a perfect oval—or as perfect as we ever see in the human face—with an Italian cast of features. A light mustache shaded his lip, and a little imperial graced his chin. The lips—red as the carnation flower, and with the fullness that gave sign of passion's fire—bid regular teeth, white as ivory. In brief, he was a man that few women could pass without the second glance. He was dressed in complete black, a color that became his pale complexion admirably. Dainty patent-leather boots incased his feet. The finest dark kids adorned his little hands, that were as small and as fair as a woman's. He, too, wore the glossy silk hat, and a single diamond sparkled in his shirt-bosom. In his hand he carried a light cane with a little black head about the size of a walnut, apparently a toy, but in reality a most dangerous weapon; for the little black head is lead, incased in a net-work of wire; it is a loaded cane: and a light blow from it would fell the stoutest man to the earth as if he were a child.

What occupation, gentle reader, do you guess those two men to follow, who, clad in "purple and fine linen," and smoking fragrant cigars, stand on the steps of the Astor House? They look like gentlemen of leisure, sons of wealthy parents, who soil not their hands with toil to gain their daily bread.

Let us ask yonder policeman. He gives a single glance at the two, and ejaculates:

"Sports!"

Men who make a living by enticing strangers to visit gambling houses—they receiving a percentage on what their victim loses. These men, with the gamblers themselves, the horse-racers and others following kindred pursuits, are all classed under one general head, "Sports."

Yes, reader, these two men standing on the steps of the Astor House, the one that looks like a fox, and the other that resembles the Farnesian Hercules, though on a smaller scale, are simply the decoys of a prominent gaming-house not a hundred yards from Union Square.

The little one that looks the personification of low cunning is known among his acquaintances as "Slippery Jim." He is a recent importation from old England, and his language shows plainly that he was reared within sound of Bow Bells.

His companion has two titles. Among the "sporting fraternity" he is known as "The Marquis"—a name given him in admiration of his easy politeness and gentlemanly bearing. In the sporting saloons of the city where the "Fancy"—as the devotees of prize-fighting are called—do congregate, he is known as "Dan the Devil," simply because he has soundly thrashed two or three bullies who had presumed to impose upon him. The fame of an achievement of this nature travels fast in New York, and many a rough who prided himself on his skill with nature's weapons, knew of "Dan the Devil" as the most terrific right-hand hitter that had ever put on the gloves.

"You seem hout of sorts to-night, 'Marquis,'" said the little Englishman.

"Yes, I don't feel well," answered the other.

"Going to do hany business to-night?"

"No, I think not," answered the "Marquis."

"Do you know, Jim, I detest this life?" he spoke quite abruptly.

"Yes, hin course I can see that hit hain't agreeable, but we can't be always choosers, you know; we've got to take life has hit comes."

"Oh, dear!" and with a sigh, the young man cast the end of the burnt-out cigar into the street. "I'm not thirty yet, but I'm sick and tired of life. Let us stroll down the street a little way; perhaps a walk will make me feel better."

So the two left the steps and strolled slowly along toward the cross-walk where the street-sweeper plied her calling.

The street-sweeper was standing on the curbstone talking earnestly with a thick-set, rough-looking fellow, who, though the night was warm, was muffled up in a shaggy coat. Another one, who seemed a counterpart of the first, except that he was not quite so heavy in build, stood some ten paces off.

"Don't beat me, please," were the words that fell upon the ears of the two men approaching. They came from the lips of the street-sweeper, not spoken in a childish treble, but in the low,

sweet tones of a young girl's voice—the voice of a girl of sixteen or eighteen.

Two deep wrinkles came between the eyes of "Marquis," as the words fell upon his ears, and stopping, he quietly laid his hand upon the arm of his companion.

"Hold on a moment, Jim," he said, in a calm undertone, "let's see what the matter is here."

"Oh, bother! it's nothing but a gal hand a cove wot his probably 'er father, hand hin course 'e 'as a right to wollop 'is hown flesh hand blood, hain't 'e?" answered Jim.

"Well, he shan't do it while I'm by," quietly said the "Marquis." "That girl is too big to be whipped. Let's stop a moment, anyway."

"Just has you say, my noble duck," responded Slippery Jim.

The two new-comers being close in to the building were in the shade, and as the men and the girl were standing on the curb-stone they had not seen the approach of the "Marquis" and his companion.

"Beat you!" growled the man in the shaggy coat; "I'll kill you first thing you know, if you ain't precious careful. How much have you taken since dark?"

"Only a dime," answered the girl, tremblingly giving the piece of currency.

"Well, curse my eyes!" ejaculated the ruffian, in disgust, "that's a nice sort of business for to do! A dime in two hours or more! How much have you hid away to buy things for yourself with, never thinkin' of your poor father wot brought you up? How much, say?"

"That is all," answered the girl, wearily, in a low, faint voice, and shivering in every limb at the threatening looks of her tyrant.

"Only a dime! why, 'tain't 'nough to pay for the beer! A nice bit of a beggar you are! Why, a blind dog with one ear could do better nor that!" exclaimed the assumed father.

"I couldn't help it, indeed I couldn't!" piteously cried the girl, while the large tears filled her mild blue eyes.

"You didn't ask 'em to give you any thing!" growled the rough.

"Yes, I did, indeed. I did!" exclaimed the girl.

"You lie, you brat, you!"

"No, no! I am speaking the truth!"

"You don't, hey? You lie, I know you do!" and the brute raised his hand as if to strike the girl.

"If he strikes that girl I'll lay him out inside of two minutes!" said the "Marquis," quietly to Jim.

"Go in, Sa-riah, hand I'll 'old yer bonnet!" cried the little Englishman, as they advanced to the group standing on the curb-stone.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRUISER MEETS HIS MATCH.

"YOU she-devil, I'll beat the truth out of you!" cried the ruffian, but, just as the raised arm was about to descend upon the trembling girl, a violent push sent the brute into the gutter, and the blow instead of falling upon the cheek of the girl wasted its force upon the air.

The push came from the arm of the "Marquis," who, swinging his cane carelessly in his hand, stood the personification of ease and innocence. The girl, unconsciously perhaps, had crept quite close to her protector.

"What the blazes did you do that for?" growled the rough, recovering his balance, and gazing into the face of the quiet, gentlemanly-looking stranger with a lowering look.

"The sidewalk is free, I believe, is it not? or do you claim a right to take up the whole street with your ugly carcass?" replied the "Marquis," in sneering tones.

The rough stared at him in anger not unmixed with astonishment. That this slim, gentlemanly-looking fellow should dare to talk back to him, a "bruiser"—a regulator of primary elections, and a great gun among the shoulder-hitters of Water street! why, the very thought astounded him.

"Say! do you know who I am?" demanded the rough, who, by the way, was known among his associates as English Bill, probably from the place of his nativity.

Coolly the "Marquis" surveyed the person of the redoubtable Bill. He scanned him from head to foot and then from foot to head.

"No," he said, slowly, after finishing his inspection, "I don't think that I ever had the pleasure of your acquaintance; I have never been in the State Prison."

Jim, who was just behind the "Marquis," could not repress a chuckle of delight at this retort.

"What the blazes do you mean?" cried Bill, in anger; "I never was at Sing Sing."

"Indeed; you must have had strong political influence on your side to have kept out of it," coolly returned the "Marquis." "How many votes do you generally cast at an election?"

"None of your cussed business!" cried Bill, in a rage. "Now, see here; did you shove me into the gutter on purpose—say?"

"My friend, you're getting excited. Never let your angry passions rise, your dirty hands were never made—"

"You go to blazes!" angrily exclaimed Bill,

cutting short the "Marquis's" quotation. "If I thought that you had shoved me into the gutter on purpose, I'd—"

"Well, what would you do?" calmly asked the "Marquis."

"Well, I'd just welt blazes out of you!" fiercely returned the rough.

"I believe that you were about to strike this girl when you stepped into the gutter so suddenly?"

"Well, wot's that to you? She's my girl and I've a right to lick her if I want to," said Bill, defiantly.

"Don't you know that the man that lays his hand upon a woman—"

"Now, you just shut up!" interrupted Bill. "I've heard just enough out of you, and if you don't travel, I'll just lam you!"

The "Marquis" again favored English Bill by looking at him from head to foot.

"Now you git up and git!" cried Bill, impatiently.

"My friend," said the "Marquis," in the same cool tone, "this child don't git worth a cent."

"Ain't you going?"

"And let you beat this girl? Not much!"

"No, it's not for Joe!" said Jim, at the same moment advancing toward the other rough, who, attracted by the prolonged conversation, was moving toward the group.

"I'll lick her as much as I like, and I'll lick you, too, if you don't get out," and Bill raised his arm threateningly.

"Oh, please go, sir," cried the girl; "don't mind me, I can bear it."

"Oh, no, my dear," returned the "Marquis," gazing into the face of the girl that he had saved from the ruffian's blow, and seeing for the first time that she was both young and pretty; "I haven't the remotest idea of going, and if this ugly brute says much more, I'll throw my hat at him and extinguish him."

The girl looked at her protector in amazement; that he, a gentleman, should dare to brave the power of the "bruiser," was something beyond her comprehension.

Her amazement was exceeded by that of the shoulder-hitter. The cool tone in which the "Marquis" uttered his taunts irritated him more than the words themselves. The coolness of the young man puzzled him. He had been used to seeing strong, burly men cower before his threats, yet this stripling seemed to defy him. For the first time in his life English Bill felt unwilling to begin an attack.

"Say, are you going?" the rough cried.

"Oh, yes," replied the "Marquis," in his cool way; "don't you see that I am going?"

But English Bill did not see it, for the young man did not move an inch, nor did he show any disposition to move.

"I'll give you just one minute to get out of this, or I'll spoil that pretty face of yours!" exclaimed the ruffian, raising his arm threateningly.

"Why don't you try it on?" asked the "Marquis," in quite a pleasant tone, but the deep wrinkle on the forehead, a certain gleam of the eyes, and the quiet closing of the little hand, boded danger to the ruffian should he make the attempt.

"Blast yer!" cried English Bill, and he delivered a terrific "right-hander" full at the face of the "Marquis," which would undoubtedly have spoilt the beauty of the handsome visage had it alighted there. But, with a quick movement of the head the young man dodged the blow, and, before the ruffian could recover himself, for he had struck the blow with all his force—the left hand of the "Marquis" grasped him by the collar, while the knuckles—that felt as hard as iron—pressing against the throat almost strangled him. A dexterous twist, and English Bill was jerked from his upright position, then laid over on his back about a yard from the sidewalk, kept from falling by the hand upon his collar. Suspended as it were in the air, his heels alone touching the ground, the ruffian was as helpless as a child; while drawing back his arm the "Marquis" stood ready to administer the terrible right hand blow that had won for him the title of "Dan the Devil."

The other rough advanced to aid his companion, but Slippery Jim "squared off" at him in scientific style.

"Just you keep hoff, or I'll climb right on your eyebrow!" cried the Londoner. The rough, undecided and not caring to risk a fight with these strangers, one of whom had shown such prowess, paused.

"Whose face stands a chance of being spoiled now?" asked the "Marquis," who felt a decided inclination to give the ruffian "one."

"Oh, please, don't hurt him, sir!" pleaded the girl.

"Let me up!" growled Bill, half suffocated by the lever-press of the knuckles in his throat.

"Are you perfectly satisfied?" asked the "Marquis."

"Yes," growled Bill, reluctantly.

"You promise not to beat this girl any more?"

"You be—" but the iron-like knuckles choked the rest of the sentence in the bruiser's throat.

"I'll have to give you 'one,' my friend, I see!" said the "Marquis," for the first time

showing signs of anger. But the girl clung to his arm and stayed the blow.

"Oh, don't, sir, please!" she cried.

"I won't beat her," muttered the rough, sullenly.

The "Marquis" relaxed his hold, and Bill, unsupported, fell on his back to the pavement. The "Marquis" stooped and picked up his cane, that he had dropped at the attack, and Bill slowly rose to his feet.

"Who the blazes are you, anyway?" asked Bill, looking upon the slender stranger who had handled him so easily.

"In some localities they call me the 'Marquis,' in others, I am known as 'Dan the Devil,'" replied the young man, who had given the pride of the rough such a downfall.

"Dan the Devil!" cried Bill, in astonishment, as he gazed with curiosity upon the elegant looking stranger. "Well, I heard of you, an' now I've felt you. I'm satisfied, I am!"

"And now, my friend, if I ever hear of your beating this girl, I'll give you a thrashing, that you won't get over for a week; and you, girl, if this ruffian ever ill-treats you, just you come to me; here's my card," and he gave a little glazed piece of pasteboard to the girl. "You'll find me at home any morning."

"Now, I've got something to say to you," said English Bill, with a menacing air. "If you travel round Water street any, just you keep your eyes open or I'll be even with you for this night's work. If I can't do it alone, I'll double-bank you; you just see if I don't."

And, with this parting threat, English Bill left the little group and crossed the street; his companion followed him, and the two turned down Fulton street.

"I don't know but that it would have been the best for you in the long run, if I had let him strike you," said the "Marquis," thoughtfully. "I suppose he will half kill you when he gets you home."

"Oh, I am used to it, sir," she replied. "It isn't for myself that I fear, but for you. There's not many that would have stepped forward to have saved me from a beating, and if Bill ever gets a chance at you, it may cost you your life, for he is a terrible, cruel man."

"Oh, don't fear for me," replied the young man; "my life ain't worth much, anyway. But, is this ruffian your father?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is your mother alive?"

"No, sir."

"You must have a hard time of it."

"I do;" the tone of the simple answer touched the heart of the "Marquis," cold, callous man of the world that he was; it showed a depth of misery that recalled to Catterton's mind the struggles of his early life.

"See here, my girl, if this fellow beats you or you ever need help of any kind, just you come to me; the usually cool "Marquis" had grown strangely impulsive. "You promise me that you will come?"

"Yes, sir," replied the girl.

"All right; where do you live?"

"No. 314 Water street, in the rear."

"With this rough, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's his name?"

"English Bill."

"How long will you remain here?"

"Till ten o'clock, sir."

"Mind, if you want a friend, come to me. By the way, what is your name?"

"Iola."

"What a strange name!"

"It was my mother's."

"Well, good-by, Iola; don't forget my address." And the "Marquis," joining Jim, continued on his walk down the street.

"Forget it!" cried the street-sweeper, impulsively; "no, it is written on my heart!"

The "Marquis" and Jim walked slowly onward for a block or so in silence. The "Marquis" was evidently in deep thought, and the Londoner did not disturb his meditations.

"Jim," said the "Marquis," suddenly, "I'm going to adopt that girl!"

"What?" cried Jim, in astonishment.

"I'm going to take her from her life of misery and give her a chance to earn an honest living."

"Well, I'm blowed hif that ain't a good idea."

"I'll go down to Water street to-morrow night and find out all about her, for I don't believe that she's the daughter of that ruffian. Will you go with me?"

"Hof course I will, my noble dook!" replied the Englishman.

Iola had gained a powerful friend when the cool "Marquis" espoused her cause.

CHAPTER VIII.

BETTER DEATH THAN LOVE.

It was a delightful afternoon; the sun shone warm and pleasant. Broadway was filled with the countless throng that the pleasant weather had called forth.

At one of the windows of a club-room on Broadway, not far from the Fifth Avenue Hotel, sat two young men gazing out upon the passing multitude.

Beadle's Dime Library.

The two men were dressed in the height of fashion, and were evidently well to do in the world.

"By Jove!" cried the elder of the two, who was elaborately "got up" in a light suit with neck-tie and gloves to match, "who is that pretty girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes in the carriage with the bays?"

The other looked in the direction indicated by the finger of his companion.

"Why, don't you know?"

"No; she's a deuced pretty girl."

"That's a distant relation of Os' Tremaine—a cousin or something of that sort. She's only been in New York about a month."

"A country cousin, eh?"

"No, not exactly; she's been to some boarding-school up the river somewhere. She's only about seventeen."

"By Jove! I should like an introduction," cried the tall one, who was called Rodman Cherring.

"I can get you one; you know I'm quite intimate with Oswald Tremaine," said his companion.

"What's her name?"

"Essie Troy."

"Deuced pretty name too."

"Yes; I say, Rod, you're not smitten at first sight, are you?" laughingly asked his companion.

"Well, I don't exactly know," he languidly replied. "I'm very partial to pretty girls."

"Well, it's natural," said the other.

"Who is that gentleman with her?"

"That's Tremaine *pere*, Oswald's governor. He's been in Europe for some years. He returned about a month ago."

"He hardly looks old enough to be Oswald's father."

"Yes, he's very well preserved," replied his companion.

Leaving the two young gentlemen gazing out of the window, we will follow Tremaine to his home on Fifth avenue.

Loyal Tremaine has not changed greatly in sixteen years. He has grown a little stouter in form and a little fuller in the face, which has also lost its youthful look, for Loyal Tremaine is now a man of forty-one.

With him seated in the parlor is Oswald, his son, a young man of twenty; for Tremaine had been married young, and his wife had died in giving birth to Oswald, a year after her marriage. Essie Troy, the girl that Tremaine had taken under his protection, was also in the room.

Oswald strongly resembled his father, although he had the dark-brown eyes and hair of his mother.

Essie, who was a girl of seventeen, was very pretty, in person a little below the medium height of women. In face a blonde, with silken, golden-haired curls clustering thickly around her dainty head. Her eyes were blue; large, lustrous, glorious eyes they were too.

Oswald, who had never heard of his relative until his father brought her home a month before, was charmed with Essie. Living in the same house, always together, Oswald in one short month had learned to love her. It was the first love of his life; and how sweet the first love is, the dream of youth which rarely becomes a reality.

Essie, too, seemed happy in the society of Oswald, and the youth had a fond hope that his passion might be returned by the fair girl whom he loved with that ardor that youth alone is capable of.

Tremaine little dreamed of the passion of his son—a passion, the knowledge of which would have filled his heart with agony. Man of the world as he was, he did not think of the danger of bringing two fresh hearts together; of the folly of throwing them in close contact with each other, and yet expecting them not to yield to that love which is the basis of all hearts. It is in our nature to love; when we curb that love we curb nature—we destroy the holiest instinct of our being. But man is often blind. Tremaine was in this instance; he would be fortunate if his eyes were not painfully opened.

"Father, here's doctor Dornton," said Oswald, as he caught a glimpse of that gentleman ascending the steps.

Tremaine rose, and telling the servant to show the doctor into his library, retired there, leaving Oswald and Essie alone in the parlor.

In the library Tremaine was soon joined by the doctor, who was a brisk-looking little man, full of life and spirits.

"Good-day, Tremaine," cried the doctor, in his usual curt, impulsive way, "I've found your secretary for you; just the man for you."

"Indeed? well, I'm glad to hear it, doctor," replied Tremaine, "for my papers need regulating. What is he like?"

"He's not a young man—indeed, I may say that he's an old man, probably about fifty-five or sixty; but in full possession of all his faculties. Quiet, careful and able. Just the man you want to look after your affairs, attend to your leases, etc. A man you can trust."

"That's a good recommendation," observed Tremaine.

"Yes, I should say so, in these days of em-

bezzlement and fraud. Ah! Mr. Tremaine, do you know I sometimes rejoice that I'm not a rich man? Blessed are they that have nothing—for they can't lose it," and the doctor laughed a merry, cheerful little laugh.

"What is this gentleman's name?"

"Well, 'pon my life I can't remember; but I've such a memory for names, you know. Never could keep one in my head longer than ten minutes. But the gentleman has the best of recommendations; he has been with Dr. Brown of Twenty-third street nearly ten years. The doctor has just given up practice, retired, and of course no longer needs a secretary. The doctor spoke to me about recommending the gentleman to any of my acquaintances that might be in need of such a person. I thought of you in an instant, as I knew you wanted a secretary and confidential man of business. So I told the doctor that I would speak to you about it once."

"It seems to me from your description," said Tremaine, "that this person will suit me exactly."

"That's just what I thought when the doctor spoke to me about him. 'There,' I said to myself, 'is the very man to suit my friend Tremaine!' This gentleman, by the way, I fancy, from what the doctor told me, is a man who has seen better days; you understand, a reduced gentleman."

"Yes; I wish you would tell the doctor to ask him to step round and see me this evening, if it is not too much trouble."

"No, of course not!" cried the impetuous doctor, "it's no trouble for me to oblige a friend. Brown's house is right on my way home, so I'll step in as I pass and leave a message for this gentleman to call upon you this evening."

"I shall be very much obliged."

"Don't mention it!"

"Won't you have a glass of wine, doctor, before you go?" said Tremaine, as the doctor rose to take his departure. "I have some excellent sherry that I imported myself; I can vouch for its goodness," and Tremaine rang for the servant.

"Well, that's saying a great deal in these days of adulteration," returned the doctor. "I plead guilty to a weakness for a little good wine—for the stomach's sake, you know, Mr. Tremaine," and the doctor laughed at his excuse.

The wine was brought, and the doctor pronounced it excellent.

"By the way," said the doctor, as he leisurely sipped his wine, "I saw Oswald and that pretty young relative of yours on the avenue this afternoon. I couldn't help thinking what a handsome couple they'd make."

This was the first time that the idea had ever been presented to Tremaine's mind and he contracted his brows at the thought.

"They wouldn't make a bad match," continued the doctor.

"I hope such an idea will never enter Oswald's head," said Tremaine, with a grave face.

"Why so?" asked the doctor, in wonder; "a young, pretty, healthy girl, as full of animal spirits as a young kid, and as modest and gentle as a violet. What better wife for your son could you want?"

"If she were perfection itself, my son could never make her his wife," gravely replied Tremaine.

"By George! I don't really understand," said the doctor, in amazement.

"Doctor, I would rather see my son lying in his grave than know that he entertained a passion for this girl, pure and good as she is!" exclaimed Tremaine, with strange earnestness.

"Well, really, I am puzzled," said the bewildered little doctor.

"Doctor, I love Essie like a daughter, and yet I would rather see her dead than know that she loved my son!" Tremaine's face bore the marks of strong emotion as he pronounced these singular words.

The doctor was bewildered.

"Well, now, really, do you know that I had an idea that you had intended to make a match between the two?" said the doctor.

"No; such a union is impossible; the laws both of Heaven and man forbid it!" exclaimed Tremaine, pacing the floor in great agitation.

The doctor could not account for this strange emotion.

"I can't really comprehend how that can be!"

Tremaine paused suddenly in front of his guest.

"Doctor, I have said more in my agitation than I have any right to utter. It is a family secret, and you will oblige me by forgetting what I have said. Banish it from your memory as if you had never heard it. Will you do so?"

"Certainly," replied the doctor; "we physicians, you know, are not used to telling tales out of school; if we were, what a precious lot of rows there would be kicked up in some families of my acquaintance?"

"I know I can trust you, doctor; and I thank you, too, for having spoken on the subject. I did not think of the danger that there was in bringing these two young people together."

"Oh, you mustn't mind my nonsense!" cried the doctor. "I don't suppose that they care two pins about each other."

"Yes, but there is danger that they may. I am glad that I have thought of this in time," said Tremaine.

In time! The father little guessed that his son was already deeply in love with the gentle Essie, that the seeds of that passion were deeply sown in his heart. The seeds of that passion the father feared more to see than death.

"Oh, I guess there isn't any danger," and the doctor drained his wine-glass and prepared to depart.

"I hope not," said Tremaine, but in his mind he was strangely uneasy.

"Yes."

"Very well; expect your new secretary then, for I know he'll suit you." And the doctor took his departure.

For a few moments Tremaine sat motionless, lost in thought.

"Suppose he already loves her?" he said aloud; "but no, that is hardly possible. She has been here but a month. I'll watch them closely, and if I see that there is danger, I will remove either one or the other."

And with this determination, Tremaine returned to the parlor.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN WITH A DEAD LIFE.

DURING the rest of the afternoon Tremaine watched Oswald and Essie closely, but he could not discover anything to confirm his suspicions.

After dinner Tremaine retired to the library to await the arrival of the applicant for the secretaryship.

At eight in the evening, the servant announced that a gentleman desired to speak with Mr. Tremaine.

Tremaine instantly gave orders to show the stranger up.

In a few moments the servant introduced a most singular-looking man into the library, then withdrew.

Tremaine examined the visitor with curiosity. In person the stranger was about the same height and build as the New Yorker. His face showed the marks of care and suffering. His hair was as white as the driven snow. Judging from his face, one would have said that he was a man of sixty, yet his figure was straight and showed not the stoop of age. He was dressed neatly in black. The strangest thing about the man was his eyes, which were as black as jet, but had a vacant, unearthly look about them; the eyes made the whole face look strange.

"You are the gentleman recommended by Dr. Brown, I presume," said Tremaine.

"Yes, sir," said the stranger, in a full, deep voice, a voice that few would expect to hear from the lips of a man of sixty.

"Be seated," said Tremaine, motioning the stranger to a chair.

"Thank you," and the stranger took the proffered seat; "here are my recommendations, sir," and he handed the gentleman a letter.

"You are called James Whitehead?"

"Yes, sir."

"The doctor speaks of you in the highest terms," observed Tremaine, after reading the letter.

"He has been like a father to me, sir," said the stranger.

"Well, Mr. Whitehead, the duties of your position in my household will not be very heavy. The principal thing is to attend to my leased property, collect the rents, attend to repairs, in fine, take the whole charge of it. Of course you will reside with me, and your position in the household will be that of a friend, not a hired servant, and as for salary—"

"Oh, never mind that, sir," said the stranger, quickly. "I am alone in the world—my wants are few."

"It is better to have an understanding," said Tremaine; "the doctor mentions in his letter that your salary with him was five hundred per year; if that sum will suit you with me—"

"Oh yes, sir," said the stranger.

"Well, then, we'll consider the affair settled, and you can enter upon your duties at once. I see the doctor states that you have been with him ten years."

"Yes, sir."

"Were you in business before that?"

"No, sir." There was a tinge of sadness in the reply.

"Excuse my questions," exclaimed Tremaine, fearing that he had recalled some melancholy memories to the mind of the old man. He had taken quite a fancy to the new addition to his household, and then, too, Tremaine was one of those humane men who hate to give pain to any one, even the lowliest.

"Oh, speak freely. You have a right, sir, to ask," said the old man. "It is but natural that you should wish to know the history of the man that you are about to trust with your private affairs."

"I fear, though, that my questions may give you pain."

"No, sir; no questions about my past life

can give me pain, for after going back ten years, my life is a blank," said Mr. Whitehead, slowly.

"A blank!" exclaimed Tremaine, in astonishment.

"Yes, a blank," repeated the stranger.

"I do not understand."

"A dead life, sir."

"Pray explain."

"A very few words will do that, sir. Ten years ago I entered Dr. Brown's office. Where do you suppose the doctor found me?"

"I cannot guess," answered Tremaine.

"I looked then just the same as I do now. I have not changed a particle in appearance in ten years."

"Why, that is wonderful!"

"Yes, it is strange, but it is true. Ten years ago I looked just as old as I do now."

"But where did the doctor meet you?" asked Tremaine.

"In the Lunatic Asylum."

Tremaine started in surprise.

"It is true, sir; that is the place where Doctor Brown first saw me."

"But were you insane?" Tremaine asked.

"Well, not exactly insane; that is, I was not mad. I was *nothing*."

Tremaine's astonishment increased.

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that I was but the shadow of a man. I could walk, eat, sleep and talk, but I was not in possession of my senses," answered the old man.

"That is, you were insane, but not dangerous."

"Yes, sir. The doctor came often to the asylum, and taking a fancy to me, attempted my cure."

"He succeeded?"

"No, sir."

"Is it possible? But you are now in possession of your senses?"

"By an accident, sir. One night I fell from my bed to the floor, striking my head heavily. In the morning I was found insensible; when I recovered, my insanity was gone."

"What a strange fact!" exclaimed Tremaine.

"Yes, sir; it excited a great deal of attention among all the medical men, but an eminent surgeon from Boston, who came on expressly to examine my case, accounted for it quite reasonably. From the examination of my head, he gave it as his opinion that my madness had been occasioned by a fracture of the skull. Consequently the second shock had acted as a counteraction to the first, and restored me my reason."

"It is quite a wonderful case," said Tremaine. "And you yourself do not know what occasioned your madness?"

"Nothing beyond the surgeon's opinion that it had been brought on by a fracture of the skull."

"And do you not remember ever having met with an accident of that description?"

"No, sir; I can remember nothing beyond the morning when I woke from my swoon with the doctors around me wondering at my strange recovery."

"And beyond that time your life is a blank?"

"Yes, sir; as I have said, a 'dead life.'"

"Why, this is a most astonishing story."

"Yes, sir. This happened ten years ago. After my recovery, I went with Dr. Brown to his office, and have remained with him ever since."

"Then you have no knowledge whatever of your early life?"

"None in the least, sir," answered the old man. "It is as strange to me as if I had never lived it. My present life commenced just ten years ago."

"But had the officials of the asylum no clew as to who or what you were?" asked Tremaine.

"No, sir; I was found in the streets wandering about. The officers arrested me; then, after an examination, they discovered my insanity and I was sent to the asylum."

"And no one ever called there to inquire after you?"

"No, sir."

"Then your family and friends—for of course you must have had both—probably considered you dead."

"And so I have been, sir," sadly answered the old man. "Dead to all the world—a 'dead life,' sir."

"But isn't there a possibility that some day you may regain your memory?" asked Tremaine.

"The doctors say not, sir. I have been to a great many, but they are all of the same opinion. They say that my restoration to sense was a wonderful accident, but that there isn't any hope for me to get my lost memory back again. I've often heard men say that they would give a great deal to forget their past lives; now I'd give all I have in the world to remember mine. It's an awful thing, sir, a man at my age without a past."

Tremaine's mind involuntarily went back to certain things that he would rather have forgotten. He saw again a pair of blue eyes looking love on him; two soft, white arms, warm with youthful life, he felt entwined around his neck;

the sweet pressure of two fond red lips glued to his. Alas! the blue eyes were closed in death, the soft arms shriveled in the tomb, and the red lips turned to dust! Loyal Tremaine could not repress a sigh as the past came back to his memory.

The old man noticed the sigh.

"I fear I have tired you with my story."

"Oh, no," responded Tremaine, hastily, "it was nothing but a remembrance that came to my mind. Then all the physicians gave their opinion that you would never recover your lost memory?"

"Yes; all except one," said the old man.

"And he gave a contrary opinion?"

"Yes. He was a Boston doctor, a learned, skillful man, but greatly given to what his brother physicians called 'isms.' He examined me very carefully; like the other Boston doctor, he said that my madness had been occasioned by a fracture of the skull, and that as a second shock of that part had partially restored me, a third would complete my cure."

"Well, the argument seems a good one. Then, to restore your memory, you have only to fracture your skull again!"

"Exactly, sir, but he said he wouldn't recommend me to try the experiment."

"On the principle, I suppose, that it might kill as well as cure."

"Yes, sir. He also said that there was one other chance for me, and that was to experience some great mental shock; if some striking event of that past life, that I cannot remember, were brought suddenly and vividly before my eyes or to my senses, it might produce a cure."

"Yours is a very strange case," said Tremaine, thoughtfully.

"Are you willing to take me into your household, sir, now that you have heard my story?" asked the old man.

"Certainly; and I assure you, sir, that I feel a deep sympathy for your misfortune."

And so James Whitehead, the man with a "dead life," became the secretary of Loyal Tremaine.

CHAPTER X.

THE DANCE-HOUSE IN WATER STREET.

AND now, reader, we will transport you to a little room on Broadway, situated on the second story of a small brick house, near the corner of Howard street.

It is an elegantly fitted-up little apartment that we enter. A handsome carpet covers the floor. Beautiful and chastely-drawn pictures ornament the walls. A cosey bed, covered by a snowy-white counterpane, is in one corner, and a luxuriant lounge is in another. A bookcase, well stored with standard poets and novels, fills a third. In a fourth a small rack, holding a double-barreled stub and twist shot-gun—one made by Mullins of Ann street—a fishing-rod, finished off in German silver—as fine a piece of work as Pritchard Brothers ever turned out—a pair of foils and masks, a game-bag, a shot-pouch, a powder-flask, a fishing-creel, and last of all a set of boxing-gloves.

All this varied display showed that the occupant of the room indulged not only in the delights of literature and the fine arts, but also in the manly sports of the field.

And now, having described the "sanctum," let us come to the occupants. There are two, both of whom we know. First, the owner of all these articles, Catterton, the "Marquis," who, seated lazily in a rocking-chair, wrapped in a dressing-gown, is puffing a daintily-carved pipe. Second, Slippery Jim, who is extended at full length upon the lounge in a state of delightful lassitude.

The gas is burning in the apartment, for the shades of night have long since descended upon the busy city.

"I say, 'Marquis'!" cried Jim, suddenly, "do you know hi ham puzzled 'bout one thing?"

"What is that, Jim?" asked Catterton, removing the pipe from his mouth, and puffing out a cloud of blue smoke that curled lazily up in little ringlets on the air.

"By 'ow a gent, as you is, can foller the life you do."

"James, some great mind has said that necessity knows no law."

"That's so, my royal nibs!" Slippery Jim was in the habit of using strange phrases.

"We can't always be what we want to, in this life," said Catterton, reflectively: "but I'm going to get out of my way of life as soon as possible. But come, it's getting late; let's be off for Water street." And Catterton sprung to his feet and commenced to pull off the dressing-gown.

"Arter the leetle gal, eh?" said Jim, rising slowly to a sitting position.

"Yes, that's my game," answered the "Marquis."

"Shall we go in these togs?" Jim asked, seeing that the "Marquis" was preparing to dress robe.

"Of course not," replied Catterton. "We don't want to play the peacock in Water street, or we may get stripped of our finery, and have a knife put into us besides."

"Vich would be very disagreeable," observed

Jim, preparing to follow the "Marquis's" example.

"We'll put on our old clothes and be a couple of longshoremen to-night," said Catterton.

"I spose we'll need our six-shooters?"

"Well, we may as well take them; there's no telling what may happen," replied Catterton, busy changing his handsome black suit for a common dark one, while Jim followed his example.

"That's so, my tulip!" answered Jim.

Our two worthies were soon transformed from Broadway dandies into Bowery roughs. It is astonishing what a difference good clothes will make in a man.

"I say," said Jim, "do you s'pose you can find the gal?"

"Well, I can try," laconically replied Catterton.

"Do you s'pose she'll be willin' to go with you?"

"I can soon find out."

"That's so!"

"It's likely that she'll jump at any chance to escape the tyranny of that brute, English Bill. I never felt so strong an inclination to strike any one in my life as I had the other night when I had hold of him."

"Hit's a pity you didn't give him one fer 'is nob."

"The child restrained me; the little one saved the brute that had beaten her so often. But, come, let's be off."

Catterton turned down the gas, and the two left the apartment, the "Marquis" carefully locking the door behind him.

The two turned down Broadway, went up Canal street to the Bowery, down the Bowery, crossed Chatham Square, turned into James street, and then into Water. And, reader, if you want to see human life packed into houses by the square inch, just take the route that I have described, any clear summer night, and before you get through James street to Water you will be gratified. You will behold a sight not to be seen in any other city in the United States; the "North-end," Boston, perhaps comes nearest to it.

Through the crowd of drunken sailors, swearing and abandoned women, ragged and dirty children of all years and sizes, itinerant vendors bawling forth their wares in the husky voice so peculiar to the New York street peddler, the "Marquis" and Jim made their way.

"What do you think of this, Jim?" asked Catterton.

"Vell, we can beat hit over the water, but not much. But that feller cryin' 'isters ain't nowhere 'side of a London costermonger; an' then you don't 'ave no donkeys 'ere to draw the carts, yer know."

"Oh, yes, we have a few," answered the "Marquis"; "but here's 300, so 314 can't be far off."

"There hit is ahead. It's a dance-house; don't you see the red light?" said Jim, pointing.

"The signal of danger, but it don't keep poor Jack off the rocks."

"Ow will you find the gal?"

"Ask one of the boys around the neighborhood."

By this time the two had reached the door of the dance-house, which was one of the lowest of its class; a den of thieves, who first drugged their victims with bad liquor, then robbed them of their money.

By the side of the building in which the dance-house was situated, was a small alleyway. This, Catterton conjectured, led to the house in the rear in which the street-sweeper lived.

The "Marquis" hailed a boy that was passing.

"I say, Bub—"

"Who are you callin' Bub, say?" answered the boy, indignantly. "Don't you know a gent when you see him, shanghai?"

"I apologize," said the "Marquis," in his most polished manner; "here's a quarter for you," which the boy pocketed instantly. "Can you tell me if there is a girl lives in the rear here who sweeps a crossing near the *Herald* office?"

"English Bill's gal?"

"Yes."

"She lives right in back o' here. Io, you mean?"

Catterton saw that this was an abbreviation of Iola.

"Yes, that's the girl I mean, Mr.—"

"Shorty, that's my handle. I sells papers, I does, an' I'm a bully boy with a tin ear!" said the youth, proudly.

This was too much for Jim's nerves, and he laughed outright in the boy's face, which made that individual dance round with rage like a bantam rooster.

"Say, you don't want to do that ag'in or I'll haul off an' bu'st you. I travel on my muscle, I does," exclaimed the pugnacious newsboy.

"I couldn't elp it, 'pon my 'onor," said Jim, with a polite bow.

"Well, that's all right," said the appeased Shorty, "cos I don't 'low nobody to grin at me. I'm a red-hot rooster, I am."

What other sort of birds or bipeds this good specimen of a New York newsboy would have claimed to be, we know not; but the "Marquis" interrupted him with a question.

"Will you go in and tell this girl that a gentleman wishes to see her?" say the gentleman who gave her his card on Broadway last night. If you go I'll give you another quarter."

"Why, you're a stick-in-the-mud on wheels, you are!" exclaimed the boy. This was evidently intended to be used in a complimentary sense. "Will I go? you kin bet your pile on it every time. Just you wait in the saloon an' I'll go an' tell 'er. Say, just look at me slide off on my ear!" and with this parting request the newsboy disappeared in the darkness of the alley.

"Got any thing to beat that in London?" asked Catterton, referring to the boy.

"No, that kid is a'ead of my time," replied Jim; "but I say, let's go hin an' see what the place is like inside while we are a-waitin'. It looks a blasted sight vourse than hour 'coal 'oles' at home, an' them an' the 'cider-cellars' are bad enough in the way of drinkin'-places."

"Yes, we might as well see the sights."

So the two entered the dance-house.

The place was pretty well filled with half-drunken roughs, wholly drunken sailors, and the degraded women usually to be found in the Water street dance-houses.

After surveying the motley, disgusting scene, Jim, in a whisper, suggested that they had better call for something to drink at the bar, for suspicious eyes were already beginning to glare upon the two strangers.

"Don't drink any thing but beer, then; the liquor here is poison," replied Catterton to the suggestion.

So the two made their way to the bar and called for beer. As they were drinking, a man stuck his head in through the door of the saloon and took a hasty glance around. When his eyes fell upon the "Marquis" and his companion, he started, and then, after a second glance, as if to assure himself, he disappeared. Jim, turning at the same moment, caught sight of the stranger's face. Catterton had not noticed him.

"My hies!" cried Jim, in a whisper, catching the "Marquis" by the arm. "English Bill's just put 'is 'ead in at the door."

"The deuce he did!" replied Catterton, in the same low, guarded tone that the information had been conveyed in. "Did he see us?"

"Yes."

"Recognized us?"

"I think he did."

"That's ugly!" and the "Marquis," despite his coolness, could not help feeling uneasy.

"We had better get hout," suggested Jim.

"Yes," replied Catterton; "if he attacks us, we are at a disadvantage."

"Just so," said Jim; "hand 'e'll probably 'ave a crowd with him."

"Yes, he's on his own dunhill now. We'll move off quietly so as not to excite attention."

And the "Marquis" and Jim quietly made their way to the door. On opening it, to their dismay they found that the passage-way to the street was filled with a crowd of roughs that were not there when they entered. Jim let the door swing to again quickly.

"Marquis, we're trapped!" and Jim gave vent to a low whistle.

"Well, it looks like it," replied Catterton.

There was no use in denying the truth; their situation, if not one of deadly peril, yet was dangerous.

"Ave you made your will, 'Marquis'?" asked Jim, with a grim attempt at pleasantry.

"No, not yet, nor I don't intend to at present. I'm worth a dozen dead men yet," said the "Marquis," coolly.

"Nothing like pluck!" observed Jim.

"There's a door at the further end of the saloon; it probably leads into the yard. Come, we'll move quietly to it. It may be open; if so, we're saved."

Carelessly, so as not to excite attention, the two walked through the crowd and reached the door; they tried it.

It was securely fastened.

English Bill, at the head of a dozen or so roughs, entered the saloon.

For the first time in his life, "Dan, the Devil," the fearless "Marquis," turned pale.

Death stared him in the face.

CHAPTER XI.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

ENGLISH BILL and his gang, sauntering slowly through the saloon, approached the end of the room where the "Marquis" and Jim stood like wolves at bay.

The pouring in of the roughs excited no particular attention, for as yet they had not made any hostile demonstration, but slowly and surely they were closing in upon the two who stood by the fastened door.

Quickly the "Marquis" ran his eye over the throng. A tougher set of desperadoes his eyes had never rested upon.

Penned in a corner as the two were, with the ruffians between them and the door of the sa-

loon, escape was not to be thought of, save by fighting their way through the crowd, and with the odds against them—six to one—the attempt was hopeless.

"Hour six-shooters vill 'ave to come into play 'ere," said Jim, quietly, to Catterton, as the ruffians were slowly advancing.

"No, no!" replied Catterton, hastily, "don't draw your weapon; they are armed as well as we. We should only be murdered outright. Let us trust to a desperate rush and our knuckles to fight our way through them, if fight we must."

"Vell, it looks like it," said Jim. "My hies!" he suddenly cried, in astonishment, "hif there ain't that leetle imp of a newsboy."

Jim's eyes did not deceive him, for, stealing along one side of the saloon, just behind the roughs, was the redoubtable Shorty. He was evidently in search of a good position to view the coming struggle. This position he found on a pile of barrels in a corner of the room near the gas-meter.

"The young imp must have delivered my message to Bill instead of to the girl," said the "Marquis."

"The young devil!" growled Jim; "hif I get out of this alive, I'll wring his neck when I catches him."

"The chances are against us," said the "Marquis," "but while there's life there's hope."

"That's so, never 'oller!" replied Jim, cheerfully.

English Bill stopped about five feet from the two; a leer of triumph was upon his ugly face.

"I think I've seen you two before somewhere, hain't I?" he asked, with a grin.

"It is probable," replied the "Marquis."

"I told you if you traveled round Water street, you had better keep your eyes open. It was your turn the other night, now it's mine."

"What are you going to do?" asked Catterton, more for the sake of gaining time, in hopes that some chance of escape might spring up, than for information.

"I'm going to spoil that pretty face of yours. I'll put such a mark on ye that your own brother won't know you?" cried the ruffian, fiercely.

"Take care you don't get marked yourself in the operation!" returned the "Marquis," his face growing deadly pale—a sure sign in him of rising anger—and his eyes flashing lurid fires.

"Well, if I can't do it myself, I've got plenty here to help me," and the rough waved his hand to the crowd behind him.

"You are a brave fellow," said the "Marquis," with bitter sarcasm.

"You'll be a beaten feller before you're ten minutes older!" cried Bill, in anger.

"Don't be too sure of that," said Catterton, coolly, although in his heart he had little hope of escape. He knew a miracle alone could save him.

"I am sure of it. I'll make you repent the minute when you first put your hands on me," exclaimed Bill, in anger.

Catterton saw no mercy in the brutal faces and frowning eyes that surrounded him. Firmly he shut his teeth together, compressed his lips, and nerved each muscle in his body for the terrible encounter.

Shorty, the newsboy, perched on the barrels, and leaning on the gas-meter, watched the scene with eager eyes.

"Ready, Jim?" asked Catterton, in an undertone.

"Ready but not willin'," replied the plucky little Englishman.

"Are you going to stand out of my way and let me leave this place unmolested?" demanded the "Marquis."

"No, you don't leave this place on two legs; when you go, you'll be carried out," answered the rough, ferociously.

"For the last time I ask you to let me go in peace."

"No, not if you were to pay me your weight in gold!" returned Bill, savagely.

"Then the consequences be on your own head!" cried the "Marquis," through his clenched teeth.

"Go for 'em, boys!" howled Bill.

Suddenly the saloon was plunged in utter darkness—some one had turned off the gas.

"Hold on! don't any one move!" shouted Bill, fearful that his prey might escape him in the darkness; but as he and his roughs encircled the strangers, save where the two walls penned them in, escape was not likely.

The crowd kept their position in obedience to the orders of their leader.

Bill expected that the "Marquis" and Jim would attempt to break through the line, and escape in the darkness, but no such attempt was made.

In a moment the gas was turned on and the saloon again illuminated.

The "Marquis" and Jim had disappeared.

Bill could hardly believe his eyes; there was the door against which the two men had stood, but where were the men?

With a howl of rage the ruffian rushed to the door. His thought was that the door was unlocked and the two, profiting by the cover of the darkness, had escaped through it.

But English Bill, dashing himself against the door, found it securely fastened.

The ruffians were astonished.

With blank countenances they gazed upon each other.

"Some one of you fellers let 'em pass!" cried Bill, in a rage.

Each and all indignantly denied the soft impeachment.

"Where the blazes did they go to?" growled Bill, sorely vexed at the escape of the men that he had marked out for his victims.

"And who turned off the gas?" asked one of the ruffians.

"Yes, that is what I'd like to know!" cried Bill.

But there was no one to answer that question.

The newsboy, Shorty, perched upon the pile of barrels, had not been noticed by any of the gang, so intent were they upon their prey, and now he had disappeared.

"They must have got into the street somehow," cried Bill, almost wild with rage. "Come, fellows!"

The roughs rushed quickly out into the street, but no trace could they find of the two that had so mysteriously disappeared from the dance-house.

English Bill was puzzled beyond expression.

"If I hadn't a-felt him and knowned that he was a man, I swear I should think he was the devil himself," said the bewildered ruffian.

Just then, Shorty, the newsboy, came down out of the alley.

The idea suddenly occurred to Bill that perhaps the two might have taken refuge there.

"Say, Shorty!" cried Bill.

"What is it?" demanded the newsboy.

"Have you seen a couple of strangers about here?" asked Bill.

"Young fellers?"

"Yes," cried Bill, eagerly.

"Dark clothes?"

"Yes, yes!" The ruffians advanced eagerly and surrounded Shorty.

"Gents?"

"Yes, yes!" chorused half a dozen voices.

The roughs began to think they had struck the track again.

"Good-lookin' gents?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, I hain't seen 'em!" said Shorty, with a grin.

"Oh!"

Bill made a blow at Shorty, which the boy dexterously avoided, and off he ran up the alley, as fast as his legs would carry him.

English Bill was beaten, but unwilling to give up the chase, with his crowd he started up the street, thinking that, perhaps, accidentally, he might stumble upon the two who had escaped from his clutches in such a mysterious manner.

And what did become of the "Marquis" and his companion? how had they escaped from their terrible peril?

We will explain.

When the gas was suddenly extinguished, the two were about to improve the opportunity offered them by the darkness and spring upon their foes, when the door behind them was suddenly opened, and they, taking advantage of the avenue of escape, quickly passed through it. Then the door was closed and bolted. All this had taken but a moment, and in the confusion and noise attending the unexpected advent of the darkness had not been noticed by the fellows who formed the cordon around the two men.

In the darkness of the yard a small, soft hand grasped that of the "Marquis".

"Give the other gentleman your other hand and follow me," said a low, sweet voice.

The "Marquis" obeyed the instructions.

Through the darkness, led on by the small hand of the unknown, who had come so timely to his rescue, Catterton went.

They passed across the yard, up a flight of rickety wooden steps into a house and through a long, narrow passage; then ascended a flight of stairs—worn into ugly holes here and there, perfect man-traps—and then they paused before a door. The guide inserted a key into the lock—the door opened; but the room within was as dark as the entry-way.

"Come in," said the voice.

The small hand had released its hold of Catterton's palm to unlock the door.

The "Marquis" obeyed the injunction and entered the room; Jim followed.

The strange guide was evidently as familiar with the route they had come, in the darkness as in the light. For she—by the voice it was plainly a female—had led the way without hesitation.

The unknown guide passed across the room—so the "Marquis" guessed by the sound of her steps. But whether she had left the room, or was still in it, he was unable to tell, for the sound of the footsteps had ceased.

"My hies!" whispered Jim, "isn't this a go?"

"Yes, I should say it was," replied the "Marquis."

"It may be hout of the fryin'-pan into the fire," said Jim, sagely.

"We'll trust to luck," replied Catterton; "whoever this person may be, she has saved us

from English Bill; we owe her thanks for that at least."

"Vell, I'd like to see who hit is."

"So should I," said Catterton.

The scratch of a match was distinctly heard by the twain.

"She is going to illuminate," observed the "Marquis."

"Then we shall see who hit is."

"Yes. She came just in the nick of time; another moment and the roughs would have made mince-meat of us."

"That turning hoff the gas was a big idea."

"It saved us, at all events."

Then the slight flame of a burning match shone at the other end of the room. By the dim light the two men could distinguish a female figure clad in a dark dress. But as the figure was bending, lighting a candle, with her back to the two, they could not guess whether she was child or woman.

Then the light of a candle illuminated the room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIRL THAT SAVED THE "MARQUIS."

THE unknown guide who had come so timely to the aid of the two men proved to be Iola, the street-sweeper. Catterton could not repress a cry of astonishment.

"Iola!" he said.

"The street-sweeper, by jingo!" ejaculated Jim, in an undertone.

"You remember my name, then?" exclaimed the girl, and a glad smile illuminated her pretty face; for she was pretty—very pretty. Being bareheaded, her features were no longer concealed by the dark, ugly hood. Her face was round and plump, the bloom of health was upon her cheeks, despite the evident misery of her way of living. Her hair was of a fair yellow tint. The eyes deep blue. The whole face expressed gentleness and purity.

The "Marquis" gazed upon the features of the young girl in astonishment. Dimly through his mind floated a remembrance of a face strangely like the one he now looked upon. But where he had seen that face, or when, he could not tell; for he felt sure that he had never seen the street-sweeper before meeting her on the Broadway crossing.

"I do not forget as easily as you seem to imagine," said Catterton; "you remember me, why should I forget you?"

"Ah, but you did me a service," quickly replied the girl.

"Well, you have repaid that service to-night, so that we are even—no, not even; for you have saved our lives, while I only saved you from a blow. So you see we are in your debt," said the "Marquis." But how did you know that we were in the dance-house and in danger?"

"I received your message."

"The boy brought it then?"

"Yes, and then as I came down to see you I saw English Bill and the other dreadful men go into the saloon. I knew that you were in there—for Shorty had told me so—and I guessed that you were in danger. So I told Shorty that you must be saved. He saw that you were near the end door, and told me when he turned off the gas, to open the door and let you through."

"So to the newsboy's plan, carried out by you, we owe our safety?"

"Yes."

"My hies!" muttered Jim, in an undertone, "and I was a-goin' to wring that young 'un's neck. Next time I see 'im, I'll buy a whole stock of papers from 'im."

"I brought you here, because I knew that this would be the last place that they would think of looking for you," said Iola.

"And is this your home?" asked Catterton.

"Yes."

"And English Bill?"

"Lives down-stairs."

"And are you really this ruffian's child?" asked the "Marquis," hardly able to credit that the ruffian could be her father.

"Yes," the girl answered, sadly.

"But you do not resemble him in the least."

"No, I take after my mother."

"And your mother?" the "Marquis" asked.

"She died five years ago."

"And she looked like you?"

"Yes, sir, her hair was the same color as mine and her eyes also," the girl answered.

"What was the cause of your mother's death?"

"She was burnt to death, sir," sorrowfully answered the girl.

"Is it possible?" asked the "Marquis," feeling a deep sympathy for the poor girl before him.

"Yes, sir, she was a ballet-girl in the theater. In a play in which she was a fairy, her dress took fire and the burns were fatal. When my mother was alive we lived in a tenement-house in Mott street; it was a poor place, but much better than this. I went to school then, but since mother died Bill has treated me very cruelly and has made me sweep crossings."

"Iola is a strange name," Catterton observed.

"Yes, it was my mother's name."

"What is English Bill's last name?"

"Thompson."

"If this Bill treats you so badly, you can not respect him very much."

"I hate him!" cried the girl, while her mild blue eyes flashed fire. "I hate him and I have never called him father."

"Would you like to leave him?" asked the "Marquis," rather astonished at this display of spirit in the quiet, sorrowful girl.

"I would run away to-morrow, if I only knew where to go," Iola answered, with an air of determination.

"Iola, you have saved my life and I wish in some way to repay the debt," said Catterton.

"Oh, don't speak of that, please!" cried the girl, quickly.

"Yes, but I must speak of it and think of it too," returned the "Marquis." "I wish to take you from this life you are leading. In some drunken fit, this ruffian will either kill you or disable you for life. Will you accept my protection? Will you let me be a brother to you—a good and faithful brother? I had a sister once and her eyes were blue like yours. She, if living, would be about the same age that you are now. Will you come and supply the place of that sister?"

The gleam of happiness upon the face of the street-sweeper showed her joy at the offer.

"But Bill," she said, and a shade passed over her face, "he will never let me leave him."

"We shan't ask his permission," coolly replied the "Marquis." "I have a friend on Canal street who is foreman of a paper-box manufactory. He employs a great many girls; the work is light and you can easily learn. I know, too, of a nice boarding-house on Grand street, close by the manufactory, kept by a widow lady. She'll take as much care of you as your mother. Iola, will you leave this den of infamy and trust to my protection?"

"Yes," answered the girl, unhesitatingly, giving her hand into the outstretched palm of the young man.

The hand of the "Marquis" trembled at the contact; the pressure of the little hand thrilled through him like an electric shock.

"To-morrow, then, I'll meet you on Broadway, at ten o'clock, by the Astor House; the very spot where I first saw you," said Catterton.

"I'll come," simply replied the girl.

"I shall expect you. English Bill will not be able to discover your refuge unless by accident, and even then, unless you consent to go with him willingly, his well-known bad character will prevent his applying to the courts to force you to return."

"Of my own free will, I never will return to him. I would rather die than to longer lead the life that I have been living!" exclaimed Iola, her pale cheeks flushed with color.

The "Marquis" gazed at the girl with a puzzled look. Vainly did he search his memory, he could not remember where he had seen her face before.

The girl noticed the look.

"Why do you gaze at me so strangely?" she asked.

"Because your face seems so familiar to me, and yet I do not think I ever saw you before the other night," answered Catterton.

"I am sure that I never saw you," said Iola.

"I have it," cried the "Marquis," as a sudden thought flashed across his brain. "I have seen your mother on the stage; that is it! And your face recalls her to me." The "Marquis" felt satisfied that he had hit upon the true solution of the mystery.

"To-morrow, then," said Iola.

"Yes, to-morrow you will cease to be a street-sweeper, and join the great army of the working-girls of New York."

"Oh, I shall be so happy away from this dreadful place!" murmured Iola.

"Do you live here alone?" asked Catterton.

"No; Bill's cook, Irish Molly, lives with me here."

"Then Bill has a cook?"

"Yes."

"And does Bill beat her too?"

"No; she is big enough to beat him."

"Where is she now?" asked Catterton.

"On Broadway, begging."

"Thank Heaven, to-morrow will get you out of this den!"

"I hope so," said the girl, and the tone told well how deep was that hope.

"Now for a retreat," said the "Marquis."

"Let me go first and see if the way is clear," said Iola, quickly. "Wait till I return," and the next instant she disappeared in the gloom of the stairway.

"She's a trump," said Jim, emphatically.

"Yes—a good little girl, and it's a good deed to take her out of this den and give her a chance for a decent living."

"That's so," responded Jim. "I say, 'Marquis,' you seem to be a-turnin' all around; you ain't the kind of a chap wot would be picked up for a missionary."

"I am changing, Jim," answered Catterton, slowly and gravely. "I am beginning to see the errors of my past life; but it's not too late

for me to make a fresh start. All I need is a little money; and I know I can get that."

"Vell, you're lucky. I wish I knew where I could get some," said Jim, in a melancholy tone.

"I am in possession of a family secret concerning one of the Fifth avenue tribe. To keep me still, they would probably pay me handsomely; but that I don't want, for I'm going to try and be upright in all my transactions hereafter—not that I have done anything very bad in the past. All I want is a loan to start me in the world; a loan that at some future time I will repay."

"Hand you think you can git hit?"

"Yes, the party has been absent in Europe for some years, but I saw a notice in the paper this morning of a grand party up-town, the other evening, and the person's name was mentioned among the guests."

"The cow that you're goin' to milk green-backs from?"

"No, not exactly that. Say rather the bank that is going to lend me the money," replied Catterton.

"There's no doubt about your gettin' it, I s'pose?" said Jim.

"Oh, yes, there is—a great deal of doubt. For unless a certain person is alive, and in this party's care, my secret is worth nothing."

"Then you ain't certain?"

"No. Sixteen years ago I was thrown off the scent, and I haven't recovered it yet."

"Vell, I wishes you luck."

At that instant the street-sweeper returned with the intelligence that the way was clear.

Carefully the "Marquis" and Jim descended the narrow, broken stairs, the street-sweeper leading the way.

The party gained the street unobserved.

"Good-by," said the "Marquis," taking the little hand of the girl in his.

"Good-by," she repeated.

"Remember to-morrow."

"Am I likely to forget?" said Iola, and sooner would she have forgotten life than forgotten that appointment.

"Good-by, God bless you!" cried Catterton, with a warm pressure of the hand, and then he hastened off, while Iola stood like a statue, and with straining eyes gazed after him.

It was a strange expression to come from the lips of the "Marquis." From the lips of the man who never in his life had entered a church or knelt at prayer.

From that night the past of Daniel Catterton was blotted out; a new life opened before him—a life that would be a life of toil, but sweetened by the bread of honest labor.

In this world the man who tries to elevate his fellow-beings elevates himself. It is impossible to do good without being the better for it.

The "Marquis," the tool of the card-sharers, who, if not really a knave himself, yet lent his talents to knavish service, by extending his hand to lift up the poor street-sweeper from the mire of degradation, also lifted himself into honesty.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FORBIDDEN LOVE.

In his cosey room sat Oswald Tremaine. Oswald was evidently in deep thought; he was gazing listlessly out of the window, but it was plain that he was not interested in the view before him.

"I wonder if she loves anybody?" suddenly cried the young man, aloud. As he was alone, of course there wasn't any one to answer the question.

"By Jove, I've a good mind to ask her!" he again cried. It is sometimes a great relief to put our thoughts in words, even if we have no listeners.

"I suppose she's down-stairs now. I'll go and see."

So Oswald descended the stairs.

This was some three days after the one in which Mr. Whitehead had been received as secretary into the Tremaine mansion.

In the parlor, looking carelessly out of the window upon the carriages rolling by—for it was a glorious April afternoon—sat Essie Troy.

Essie was evidently reflecting, for she was tapping her fingers vacantly on the windowsill, and her eyes were not noticing the people passing in the street; many of whom cast glances of admiration at the fair-haired girl in the window.

The door opening, disturbed her meditations. She looked up, and beheld the new secretary, Mr. Whitehead.

"I beg pardon," he said, in his usual mild, hesitating way. "I thought Mr. Tremaine was here."

"No, uncle went out an hour ago for a drive," said Essie.

"Oh, well, it's of no consequence," and then the old man looked at the young girl in a strange manner. A puzzled look appeared upon his face. Essie wondered at the gaze.

"I beg pardon, miss," said the old man; "but, somehow, your face seems so familiar to me."

"I do not remember to have ever seen you before," answered Essie.

"No, no," the old man murmured, confusedly; "but—Mr. Tremaine is your uncle, I believe?"

"Yes," said the girl, astonished by the strange manner of the old man.

"It's strange; your face seems so familiar to me," dreamily muttered the secretary; "and yet, can she have been in my past? No, no! She is too young. Don't wonder at me, miss. I—I sometimes have childish fancies. Your face seemed so familiar to me that I thought I had seen it before. I beg your pardon." And the old man bowed himself out.

"Oh! if I could only remember!" sighed the old man, as he closed the door. "Her eyes and hair seemed so familiar, and yet she could only have been a child, an infant, when my dead wife was living. Oh! will the past ever come back to me?" Slowly the old man took his way up-stairs, passing Oswald, who was coming down.

Oswald entered the parlor where Essie was sitting, wondering over the strange manner of the old man.

Essie looked up at Oswald's entrance, and the smile upon her face told him that he was welcome.

"Do you want company, Essie?" he asked, seating himself by her side.

"Well, that depends upon whose company it is," answered the girl, archly.

"How will you like mine?" Oswald asked, inwardly admiring the pretty girl before him, and what object in the world is prettier than a blooming, blushing girl of seventeen? One with the roses fresh in her cheeks, innocence in her heart, and purity encircling her like a halo of light.

"Stay here a little while, and perhaps I will tell you, that is if you will be very good," she said, smilingly.

"Essie, do you know that I think father made a great mistake in not letting you and I know each other before this visit?" said Oswald, gravely.

"Why so?"

"Well, we might have been better acquainted—have liked each other ever so much better."

Essie stole a shy glance at Oswald's face, and being caught in the movement blushed to the temples.

"Why, Essie, what are you blushing for?" and Oswald took one of her little white hands in his. The hand did not resist, but remained motionless. Essie's eyes were cast upon the ground, shyly.

"You don't answer my question?"

"I can't tell," Essie murmured.

"Essie," continued Oswald, taking advantage of the girl's capitulation and passing his arm gently around the waist of the unresisting girl—and few girls resist these proofs of love in the man—"I am saying something to you now with my eyes; something that I wish to say with my tongue, but I find that it's dreadful difficult. Can you guess what I am saying?"

Essie stole a single shy look under her eyelashes, then demurely cast her eyes to the ground again.

"Essie, you don't answer."

"What do you want me to say?" she asked, softly.

"Why, yes or no," he answered.

"Oh! then it doesn't make any difference which I say?" she said, with a faint smile.

"Now, don't joke, Essie," said Oswald, just a little reproachfully. "Can't you guess what I'm trying to say to you with my eyes?"

"I'm not good at guessing," said the girl, archly.

"I see you wish me to speak then?"

"Why, of course. You wouldn't be good company if you didn't talk." Essie, with the natural coquetry of woman, was avoiding the subject.

"Essie!" exclaimed Oswald, abruptly, "have you ever been in love?"

"Why, what a strange question," answered Essie, stealing another shy glance at Oswald's earnest face.

"Won't you answer it?" said Oswald, earnestly.

"Why, how can I? Perhaps I do not really know whether I have ever loved any one or not."

The answer was decidedly unsatisfactory to the anxious lover.

"Have you ever told any one that you loved them?"

"Oh, yes!" quickly exclaimed Essie. "Oh! so many people; my schoolmates, my teacher, your father, and—"

"Oh, nonsense, Essie!" impatiently cried Oswald; "you are evading the question; you know that I don't mean that sort of love."

The smile upon the lips of the girl told that she knew well enough what he did mean.

"What do you mean, then?" she asked, looking full in his face with the great, truthful blue eyes.

"Another kind of love; the love that Romeo felt for Juliet. You remember the play?"

"Yes," answered Essie, softly, casting down her eyes before the ardent gaze of her lover.

"Have you ever felt that love?" and Os-

wald's heart beat quickly as he waited for the answer.

"Didn't Romeo tell Juliet that he loved her before she answered the question?" asked Essie.

"Then, like Romeo, I'll speak. Essie, I love you!"

Oswald felt the little hand tremble in his, he saw the golden lashes sweep the white cheek, as Essie shyly avoided his impassioned glance.

"Essie," he said, after a pause, finding that she did not answer, "don't you think that you can love me a little?"

"We have known each other such a little while," she murmured, slowly.

"Long enough for me to learn to love you with my whole heart," he said, quickly. "Essie, I feel sure that I couldn't know you any better than I do now, if we were to be together ten years. I have never loved any girl in my life till I saw you. Essie, won't you love me a little?"

"But, Oswald, I am only a poor orphan dependent upon your father. I have no claim upon him, except that I am a distant relative; yet he has been like a parent to me. I have no relation in the world that I know of, but Mr. Tremaine. Ever since I was an infant he has taken care of me; and it is not very often in this world that rich people help their poor kindred. What would your father say then, if I allowed myself to fall in love with you? Would he like to have his only son marry a poor girl?" Essie spoke earnestly, looking into her lover's face with an expression of sadness upon her pretty features.

"My father is a sensible man," Oswald answered. "His wealth is not the sudden result of accident, but he was born to it. It has not turned his head as it does the heads of those that have fortune suddenly thrust upon them. He will not think one whit the worse of you because he knows that you are penniless. Essie, father loves you—he has proved that—loves you like a daughter. Do you think that he will be unwilling to accept you from my hand as one? Do you not think that he will be glad to have me give him such a daughter?"

The fortress makes but a poor defense that has treachery within its citadel, and the heart does not require much persuading that is already prepared to yield.

Essie loved Oswald Tremaine—loved him with all the strength and deepness of a girl's first love—and to be his wife would be the crowning joy of her young life.

"Essie, can you love me—will you be my wife?" Oswald's voice was deep and earnest, as he put the momentous question, the answer of which would sway all his future life.

"Oswald, I—" and Essie's hand trembled in the warm grasp of the young man.

"Well—do you love me?"

"Yes," and Essie hid her face, shyly, on the breast of her lover.

Oswald's cup of happiness was full to overflowing. He looked with tenderness down upon the little golden head pillow'd upon his breast. Caressingly he passed his hand over the fair curls.

"Essie, darling," he said, gently, "one little kiss." Slowly and shyly he raised her head. The lips of the lovers met in a long, lingering kiss. Then the door suddenly opened, and there, in the entrance, stood Loyal Tremaine, overwhelmed with astonishment and dismay.

CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER AND SON.

LOYAL TREMAINE was thunderstruck at the discovery he had made; for the peculiar position in which he had discovered Oswald and Essie left no doubt whatever in his mind that the two were lovers. The very event that he had feared had occurred. He had only himself to blame for his own carelessness in bringing the two together.

Essie started up with a slight scream when she beheld Tremaine, while Oswald rose and faced his father calmly. He was not ashamed of his love for Essie Troy.

"Essie, my dear, will you leave the room for a few minutes? I have something to say to Oswald."

The tone of Tremaine was kind and gentle; there was not the least trace of harshness in it.

With cheeks covered with blushes, Essie hastened from the room, glad to escape to the solitude of her own apartment, and there reflect upon the events of the past hour—there to wonder if Oswald loved her as well as she loved him, and if her uncle would ever give his consent to her marriage with his son.

It is well that we cannot read the future, sometimes; for if Essie Troy could have looked forward into her future, she would have seen a dark cloud hanging like a sable pall over her young life; she would have seen a gulf between her and her lover—a gulf so wide that even her pure and ardent love would fail to bridge it—a gulf as deep as the despair which was soon to come upon her young being.

Ah, Essie, enjoy the present, for the future for you is black indeed!

Tremaine, after Essie's flight, entered the parlor and closed the door carefully behind him.

Oswald noticed that his father's face showed no signs of anger—it was pale, quite pale, and a sorrowful look was upon it.

Tremaine paced up and down the parlor for a few minutes, as if in deep thought. Oswald waited for his father to speak, with impatience.

At last Tremaine paused before his son.

"Oswald," he said, and he spoke kindly, without a trace of anger in his voice, "what was the meaning of that position that I found you in with Miss Troy?"

"It can only have one meaning, father," answered Oswald, frankly.

"And that is?"

"I love Miss Troy."

Although he had expected the answer, yet Tremaine started as though he had been smitten with sudden pain.

"Oh, Heaven!" he murmured to himself, "I feared this!"

Oswald gazed upon his father's emotion in astonishment. He could not understand why the confession of his love for Essie Troy should create this agitation in the breast of his parent.

"You love her, Oswald?" questioned Tremaine, as if unable to believe the evidence of his own senses.

"Yes, sir, I love her."

"Oh, no!" cried Tremaine, violently agitated, "it is impossible!"

Oswald stared, at these strange words.

"No, sir, it is not impossible," he replied; "it is the truth."

"You forget—she is a penniless girl!" cried Tremaine.

Bad argument for the father to use. He had forgotten his own youth; he had forgotten that he had once loved a girl who was not only penniless but legally another's. Poverty is a bad argument to hurl at the head of a young and anxious lover.

"I love Essie for herself, father," replied Oswald. "I should not love her any better if she were worth a million; I should not love her less than I do now, if she were poorer than she is."

"Oswald, this is folly!" cried Tremaine, exclaiming.

Another bad argument; the young do not like to be told that they are acting foolishly.

Oswald bit his lip, but replied not to his father's speech.

"Oswald, you will forget this girl?" and Tremaine looked pleadingly into his son's face.

"Father, I can not," quietly replied the young man.

"I tell you that she is no match for you!"

"Because she is poor?"

"Ye—yes," Tremaine answered, with some hesitation.

"Then I will make her a fit match by giving her some of my wealth!"

"Why, Oswald, you forget all you have in the world comes from me."

"No, father," replied Oswald, firmly, "my health, strength and brain are my own. I do not fear but that I can hold my own in the world. Heaven willing, I can support Essie with the work of my two hands. Father, I do not ask one single penny of your money; only give me your consent to my marriage, and I'll go out into the world with a light heart, and battle cheerfully for myself and mine."

Oswald's nature had the ring of the right metal, and Tremaine could not help feeling proud, as he looked upon the handsome face of his son, and listened to his respectful but manly words.

"Oswald, be warned. You know well enough that I have never grudged you any thing in this world. I have been any thing but a stern father, and now I ask you, in return, to give me one favor—mind, I do not demand it; I simply ask it."

Tremaine's voice was full of entreaty.

"And that favor is?"

"That you will give up all thoughts of Essie Troy."

"Father," answered Oswald, "the favor you ask I can not give you. It is impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Yes; in the first place, I love Essie too well to resign her, and even if I could control my feelings and yield to your request, I am in honor bound not to do so."

"Bound! How?" asked Tremaine, in amazement.

"I have asked Essie to be my wife," Oswald answered.

"And she consented?" asked Tremaine, in agitation.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, I had no idea that it had gone as far as this," murmured Tremaine, slowly, in an undertone. Oswald did not hear the words.

"So you see, father, it is impossible for me to retreat in honor, even if I wished to do so, which, father, I do not. I love Essie; she loves me; her own lips have told me so, and why should I resign my happiness?"

"There is a reason, my son."

The New York 'Sharp.'

"Tell me what it is!" was Oswald's natural exclamation.

"I can not!" exclaimed Tremaine, excitedly.

"A reason that forbids my union with Essie?"

"Yes."

"Is it because she is poor?"

"No, no," said Tremaine, reluctantly.

"What then is the reason?" asked Oswald, in astonishment.

"I can not tell you," said Tremaine, slowly and sadly.

"Can not tell me!" exclaimed Oswald, still more astonished.

"No, I can not," repeated Tremaine, evidently in sorrow.

"Father, you are not deceiving me? There is a reason that forbids my marriage with Essie?"

"Yes."

"And you will not tell it to me?"

"Oswald, I have told you that I can not!"

"And why not?" asked the son, perplexed at his father's strange words.

"That I can not tell you, either," replied Tremaine.

"Father, there is no earthly reason that forbids my union with Essie Troy!" cried Oswald, impetuously. "This is only some device to prevent me from wedding the girl to whom my whole heart is given. Father, this is not worthy of you. I did not believe that you would use trickery with me in a matter in which my whole heart is bound up."

"Oswald," said Tremaine, slowly, "I again repeat that there is a reason that forbids your union with this girl—a reason that, if you knew it, would make you recoil from her in horror, and curse the minute when you first allowed this fatal love to enter your heart."

The tone of the father's voice, coupled with his strange words, struck a chill to the heart of the son—to that heart which was so full of love for Essie Troy.

"Father, you speak in riddles!" he cried. "Do you mean to say that there is a taint of shame upon Essie?"

"No, no; not upon her!" hastily cried Tremaine.

"Upon some one connected with her, then?"

"Yes, yes!" answered Tremaine, sadly.

"What, then, is that to me?" demanded Oswald, throwing his head back proudly, as though to defy the world. "I marry Essie—I do not marry her guilty kindred if guilty they be. When she takes my name she loses her own, and the man will have to be a bold one that dares to say a single word against the wife of Oswald Tremaine."

Loyal Tremaine gazed upon his son, who thus boldly threw down the gauntlet to the world, with a sardonic look, but one in which pride too was mingled, for the father was proud of his boy. He looked upon the face wherein was written scornful defiance, and thought how quickly that look would be turned to anguish and despair when he learned the fatal truth that he seemed so determined to hear.

But Loyal Tremaine determined to spare his son the pain of the awful disclosure, if possible.

"Oswald, the secret concerning Essie touches you more nearly than any other person in this world. That is why I do not wish to speak it; the truth once known to you—if you really love this girl—will blast your life forever!"

Tremaine spoke firmly but kindly.

"My life!" cried Oswald, in amazement.

"Yes," answered the father; "and if Essie learns it, and she also truly loves you, it will render her forever miserable."

Oswald could hardly believe his hearing. What could this terrible secret be?

"Tell me, father, I implore you!" he exclaimed. "The truth can not affect me more than this suspense."

"No, no!" Tremaine cried, "you shall never hear it from my lips, if I can keep it from you. For the last time, Oswald, I implore you to give up all thoughts of this girl!"

"Father, I can not!" Oswald answered, firmly.

"You will not banish this fatal passion from your heart?"

"My word is pledged to Essie; she is my plighted bride, and I will not break my word."

"Oswald! Oswald!" cried Tremaine, his face clearly showing his agitation, "your marriage with Essie is impossible!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the son, strangely impressed with his manner. "Why is it impossible?"

"That is what I will not tell you, if I can help it," replied Tremaine. "There is one chance to save you from this anguish, and that chance lies in Essie's hands."

"I do not understand!" cried Oswald.

"I will go to her; tell her that I object to this union, and ask her to give you back your promise—"

"She will never do it, unless you force her to it!" said Oswald, warmly.

"I shall not use force—only entreaty," replied the father, sadly. "If she truly loves you—"

"I'll stake my life that she does!" cried Oswald.

"Then she will not give you up, and the terrible secret—the secret that wrings three hearts—must be told."

The voice of Tremaine trembled with emotion.

"You will only ask her, then, to give me up?"

"Yes."

"And if you find that she really loves me?"

"I shall be forced to utter words that will make you fly from her as though she were a snake coiled in your path—good, pure, innocent girl that she is."

And with these mysterious words, so terrible in their import, Loyal Tremaine left the apartment, while Oswald remained a prey to terrible fears—terrible, for the hidden danger is the one that chills the heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THE "MARQUIS" IS ASTONISHED.

IOLA kept her appointment with the "Marquis," and was by him conducted to the boarding-house on Grand street.

Catterton had previously explained to the lady that kept the house the circumstances connected with the street-sweeper, and her rescue from the life of misery that she had led.

The "Marquis," considerably, left a small sum of money in the hands of the landlady, Mrs. Wiggins, to be applied to fitting out Iola in a dress more suited to her new station than the shabby one she wore.

The next morning Catterton called to take his adopted sister to the shop which was to be her place of employment for the future. The "Marquis" had seen the foreman of the manufactory, and readily he agreed to receive Iola and teach her the business.

Catterton entered the parlor of the boarding-house, and the landlady, requesting him to be seated, sent for Iola.

In a few minutes the street-sweeper entered the room. The "Marquis" looked at her in astonishment. The change in her appearance from the preceding day was wonderful. She was attired in a neat calico dress, with little white cuffs on her wrists, and a dainty collar around her neck. Her superb tresses of yellow hair—that was of the tint of the wheat-field when the sheen of the sun ripples upon it—was snugly bound up in a little net.

Her blue eyes danced for joy when she saw the "Marquis," and with both hands outstretched, and a bright smile of joy illuminating her face, she ran to him.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come," she cried.

"Why, Iola!" he exclaimed, surveying the exquisitely-formed little figure before him with admiration—the "Marquis" had a great liking for little women—"this is a change indeed!"

"Yes, don't I look nice?" she cried, in delight. The innocence of the remark brought a smile to the lips of Catterton.

"Why, you are a perfect little fairy."

"Do you think so?" she exclaimed, joyfully.

"Yes, indeed, I do," he replied.

"I am so glad that I please you," she answered.

The cold, callous "Marquis"—the man of the world, whose boyhood had been one long struggle with misery, whose majority had been reached in a gaming-hell, whose school had been the streets, and whose master had been dire necessity—felt a peculiar sensation creep over him, as he looked upon the girl whom he had rescued from that life, the living of which is misery, and the end is shame alone. The sensation was new to him—he had never felt any thing like it before.

"There," he said, mentally; "see how a good deed makes a man feel?" And yet, in his short life, the "Marquis" had done many a good deed, and yet had never felt this strange sensation before.

"Why, you are quite a lady, Iola. I thought you were but a child; but now that you have on a long dress, I see you are nearly a woman."

"I am seventeen," answered Iola, quickly, and she looked eagerly into the "Marquis's" face, as if to see how he received the news of her age.

The "Marquis" was astonished.

"As old as that!" he said. "Why, even dressed as you are now, I should not have taken you to be over fifteen at the most. I thought you were a child."

"Yes, but I am not," she answered, quickly; "I am quite a woman."

It was evident that Iola had some strong reason for wishing Catterton to consider her something else than a child.

"Yes, quite a woman," he replied, and during this short conversation he had been holding both her hands in his, as she had given them in her joy when she entered.

"Well, Iola," he said, releasing her hands,

"are you comfortable here?"

"Oh, yes; real comfortable," she answered; "the lady is so kind."

"Why, Iola," said Catterton, seating himself in a rocking-chair, "I never saw such a change in any one in my life, as in you."

"Yes," she said, bringing a little stool out of a corner and sitting down beside the "Mar-

quis," her chin resting on the arm of the rocking-chair, and her full blue eyes gazing brightly into his face.

"You have not only changed in dress, but your whole nature seems changed," he said, wondering at the same time, as he looked into her face, why he had never noticed what pretty eyes she had before.

"I am free now," she answered, gayly; "before I was a slave. Now I am happy; then I was wretched. A slave, you know, is very rarely happy."

"Yes, but you are not free now," the "Marquis" said, gravely.

Iola looked up, astonished.

"You have a master, and a very terrible one, too."

For a moment the girl looked puzzled; then, suddenly comprehending his meaning, she laughed gayly, and seizing his hand, placed it upon her head.

"Yes, I am a slave, and you are my terrible master. See, I acknowledge it!" Then seizing the other hand in her little fingers, she carried it to her lips and imprinted two little kisses on it. The touch of the little red lips thrilled through his veins.

The "Marquis" was puzzled; he could not account for the strange feelings that agitated him.

Iola, still holding his hand tight in her little palms, was looking up into his face with the same adoration that the Hindoo worships the carved god, the symbol of his faith.

Then the "Marquis" noticed how beautiful the hair of the young girl was, how fine and how like silk its softness. And, looking down into the fresh young face, he began to think that a fair young girl of seventeen was about as pretty an object as could be found in the wide, wide world.

"You are willing to be a slave, then?" he asked.

"Yes, your slave," she answered, quickly, "but not any one else's."

"Oh, I sha'n't resign you to any one!" he replied; "but come, I must take you to your future workshop."

Iola ran up-stairs for her hat and cloak.

The "Marquis," left alone, felt like a man that had awakened from a vision of bliss—awakened to find it all a dream. His senses were in a whirl. Something was evidently the matter with him, but what that something was he was unable to tell—unable even to guess.

"Confound it!" he cried, rising from his seat, "if doing one good action makes a fellow feel like this, what effect would a dozen have upon him?"

Catterton escorted Iola to the paper-box manufactory, introduced her to the foreman as Miss Iola Thompson, saw her installed as one of the employees of the establishment, and, after promising to call upon her that evening, took his departure.

The "Marquis" walked down Canal street and turned into Broadway. Having nothing particular to do, he strolled up the street. That street of all streets in America; always filled with a busy, bustling crowd, a moving picture of life, always changing, ever varying; where the beggar elbows the millionaire, and the bootblack walks "cheek by jowl" with the Fifth avenue "blood."

Just as the "Marquis" crossed Grand street, a fine team of bays, attached to a handsome open carriage, in which sat a gentleman of middle age and a young girl in her teens, stopped before the door of Lord & Taylor's.

The eyes of Catterton were attracted by the "Lays," for he was a great admirer of herself, and had often pronounced them the handsomest things in the world. He had, however, found reason to change his opinion that morning, and a horse now held but a second place in his estimation of beautiful objects. After glancing at the "bays," he happened to look at the lady and gentleman descending from the carriage.

The moment his eyes fell upon the face of the lady he started.

"The devil!" he cried, "what an astonishing resemblance!"

Then the eyes of the "Marquis" noted the face of the gentleman, and again he started.

"I can't be mistaken," he muttered, "it must be he!" Then the "Marquis," who had halted near the corner, strolled carelessly toward the carriage. By this movement the "Marquis" obtained a good view of the people who had made such an impression upon him.

"It is my man, sure!" he said, decidedly, as the two entered the store. "But is it the girl? Ah! that's what I've got to find out. If she ain't living, and with this man, I'm done for." The "Marquis" thought for a moment.

"She looks enough like the mother to be the child. I'm sure it's Tremaine. He hasn't altered much in sixteen years—grown a little stouter and a little fuller in the face, but not materially changed. How can I find out?" he mused. "I have it! I'll pump the driver. What was the name of the girl? Oh! I remember."

Then the "Marquis" advanced to the side of the carriage. The driver had descended from the box and was standing by the horses.

"A splendid team you've got there, my friend," said Catterton, in his smoothest voice.

The driver turned and favored the "Marquis" with a searching gaze; but beholding a handsome young fellow, evidently by his dress—that oft-deceptive sign—a gentleman, he replied, civilly:

"Yes, sir, they're a fine team."

"Mr. Tremaine's ain't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so."

"Nice team, sir."

"Yes, about as good a pair of bays as I have ever seen," and the "Marquis" put his head on one side and surveyed the animals in a "horsey" manner.

"Oh, they are rattlers, sir!" said the coachman, feeling a natural pride in the beasts that he drove.

"Worth about a thousand, ain't they?"

"Well—no, sir, not quite so high as that," replied the coachman. "I think, Mr. Tremaine gave eight hundred for them."

"Well, now, I should call that cheap," said the "Marquis," decidedly, and with another "horsey" look at the beasts, about which in reality he felt as little interest as he did about the man in the moon; but the "Marquis" was after information.

"Yes, they were a bargain."

"How fast can they go? About four minutes, eh?"

"Well, yes, sir; with training, I think they'd make that easy; perhaps cut off a few seconds. They're Hambletonian stock, sir, from up the river," said the driver.

"Good stock! Are they gentle?"

"As lambs, sir."

"I suppose the young lady could drive 'em without danger."

"What, Miss Essie?" cried the coachman; "why, she has drove 'em in the Park the other day in a light wagon with young Mr. Tremaine, an' they went beautifully."

"By the way, what's Miss Essie's last name? I never can remember it!" and the "Marquis" had a good reason, for few men have the art of remembering what they never knew.

"Troy, sir." The driver was sure he was talking with an acquaintance of his master.

"Ah, that's it!" cried Catterton, in a tone that indicated wonder at forgetting it. "Isn't Miss Troy some relative to Mr. Tremaine?"

"Yes, sir; niece. She's just come from a boarding-school at Troy, sir; been there ever since she was a child. I've heard, sir," the coachman had the natural desire to tell all he knew about the family he lived in, "that she is an orphan without any folks but Mr. Tremaine, and that he's always taken care of her. And I must say, he seems as fond of her as if she was his own child."

"Tremaine's a good man," said the "Marquis."

"That he is, sir!" emphatically replied the coachman.

"Those are fine horses. Good-day."

"Good-day, sir."

And the "Marquis," having found out all he wanted, strolled leisurely up the street, admiring the pretty women that are always so plentiful on Broadway. But mentally he compared them to Lola, and the comparison was decidedly to her advantage.

The coachman looked after the elegant figure of the "Marquis."

"Now, he's a gent, he is, and a judge of horse-flesh too." The "Marquis" had made a favorable impression upon the man that he had been pumping for information.

"So, ho!" mused the "Marquis," as he strolled along, "I think that little bit of work would reflect credit upon any member of the detective force. It is Loyal Tremaine, as I thought, and the girl too. The name, Essie, confirms it. That was the name. Troy! that's simple enough. What better last name could he give the girl than the town where he sent her to be brought up? For of course he did send her there. As fond of her as if she was his own child, and no wonder." Then the "Marquis" laughed quietly to himself. "There isn't the least doubt about the matter; she's the girl. But stop—" and Catterton pulled the ends of his mustache reflectively. "Can I prove that this girl is the girl? That's a knotty point! That remains to be seen. I think I will have to call upon Mr. Tremaine this afternoon or to-morrow afternoon, and have a talk over old times."

For a block or two the "Marquis" walked on in deep thought.

"If I were a rogue now, what a rod of iron I could hold over this girl—how I could bend her to my will," he mused. "I wonder if that act of mine sixteen years ago was a crime? I think not. Blood is thicker than water, and on that I acted. At all events, it's too late to alter it now. Essie—as Tremaine calls her—is just where I want her to be, and never, by word or act of mine, will I pull her down from her proud position. I made her what she is; never will I unmake her."

And with these strange thoughts in his mind, the "Marquis" strolled up Broadway.

CHAPTER XVI.

A WOMAN'S LOVE.

LOYAL TREMAINE, after his interview with his son, which had been so unsatisfactory, with a heavy heart proceeded up-stairs and entered the library.

The servant answered Tremaine's tap on the bell.

"Tell Miss Troy that I would like to see her in the library. You will find her in her room, probably," he said.

The servant left the apartment, and Loyal Tremaine was left alone with his gloomy thoughts.

"This is a terrible retribution," he muttered, as the memory of the past came back to him. "This is a justice for me, indeed. I am rightly punished for the old sin."

The rich man closed his eyes with a deep sigh, as if to shut out the memory of the past. Vain hope! For closing the eyes, simply, does not bring forgetfulness.

Back to the mind of Loyal Tremaine came vividly the memory of bygone days. He saw again the face of Christine, the woman he had loved so well that to obtain her he had sinned. The woman who had loved him so well that she had dared all the scorn and contempt of the world for that love—that guilty love that had brought the lightning-stroke of an outraged Heaven down upon her sinful head; that guilty love, that now, after the lapse of sixteen years, had brought a terrible visitation upon the man that had urged the woman to sin, as a punishment for his crime.

"The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine!" No one in this world escapes from the consequences of evil deeds. Years may pass, but in the end retribution will come; not openly, perhaps, in the face of all the world; but silently and secretly. The poison rankling in the veins inflicts as much pain as the blow of the bludgeon, though one be secret and the other visible to all. Let not mortal think that the dread, unwritten laws of Heaven and of Nature can be broken without punishment falling upon the guilty head of the evil-doer. The punishment may not be apparent except to himself, except to his own nature. He suffers doubly, who suffers silently and alone.

For the first time in his life, Loyal Tremaine understood the feelings which must have seized upon the heart of the young sailor, Walter Averill, when he came back from battling with the tempest and the roaring wild sea waves, and found that his house was desolate; that his household gods—his wife's faith and purity—had fled on the sable wings of night, and left behind naught but despair and desolation.

The steel shaft of remorse was in the soul of Tremaine for his early crime. His own anguish made him understand the anguish that he had caused another to suffer.

For sixteen years Loyal Tremaine had lived in the fear that Walter Averill, the sailor husband, the man that he had so greatly wronged, would some day appear suddenly before him, denounce him as his wronger and demand justice.

The demand had been made, not by the voice of the wronged husband, but from the lips of Tremaine's own son came the demand.

What were the pangs that all the justice of earth could cause, to the hell now raging in the breast of the father when he thought of the life-blight that perforce he must bring upon his only son, and upon the girl, too, whom he loved with all a father's affection?

"Essie alone can avert the evil," he murmured; "will she do it? or is this passion—this love"—the fatal strength of which he knew full well—"so strongly fixed in her heart that she cannot give it up? This fatal love which must drag her and Oswald to the depths of utter despair."

A few minutes would answer the question and solve the riddle.

Timidly Essie entered the room, still blushing, red as a rose, as she thought of the discovery in the parlor.

"Sit down, Essie," said Tremaine, kindly.

Essie took fresh courage at the kindness of his manner. Why should he, who had always treated her as a beloved daughter, be angry if she loved his son—his son, who resembled his father so much?

"Essie," and Tremaine spoke gently, "my son tells me that he loves you; he has also told you so, has he not?"

"Yes, sir," murmured the girl.

"He has asked you to be his wife?"

"Yes, sir," Essie began to hope that the course of her true love was destined to run smooth.

"You have accepted his love and consented to be his wife?"

"I have, sir," and Essie timidly raised her eyes, as if seeking in the face of her guardian to read his decision upon her action.

"Essie, do you love my son?"

Tremaine waited eagerly for her reply. It came full and strong. No sign of weakness or hesitation in the tone. The heart of Essie Troy was in her voice.

"Yes, sir, I do!"

"Oh!"

The single exclamation told Essie that the smooth water was past, and that the bark of love was on dangerous seas, hiding many an angry, death-dealing rock; the breakers were in sight, and the white foam-caps struck terror to the heart of the girl.

"Essie, examine well your own heart!" cried Tremaine, in great agitation; "are you sure you love my son? Remember that the whole happiness of your life may depend upon your knowing the truth. You are but a child in years—have mingled very little with the world. There may be a hundred in the future that you are fated to see, that you will like better than you do Oswald; whose nature may be a thousand times more suited to your own, than his can ever be. All your future life may depend now upon your decision in this one little matter. You may fancy that you love Oswald. He is the first young man that you have been intimate with. You think you love him, but be careful and do not mistake friendship for love or you will bitterly repent it hereafter. Take time, Essie, do not answer hastily."

Tremaine was but wasting breath.

"A man convinced against his will is of his own opinion still," says a trite old adage, and unlike many other old sayings, it is extremely true.

Attempt all impossible things, but do not attempt to convince a young girl that she does not love the man she has chosen for the master of her heart. Argument only strengthens her in her belief. Use force, she flies to his arms, and, like the engineer, you are "hoist by your own petard."

Essie was as fully convinced that she loved Oswald as she was that she was living and breathing.

"Oh, uncle!" she answered, "I am sure I love Oswald, and that I shall never love any one else."

A similar remark has been made in like cases by a hundred girls, who afterward didn't marry the loved one, and did marry some one else. But, as a noted character of fiction has remarked, "Women are so devilish unreliable!"

Essie saw plainly that there was some obstacle in her path to happiness, but what that obstacle was she could not guess.

"Essie, this is a terrible blow to me!" exclaimed Tremaine, and the expression of pain upon his features showed that he spoke the truth.

"Why, uncle, do you object to my loving Oswald?" asked Essie, tremblingly.

"Yes, yes!" he answered.

"I know I am poor," murmured Essie, and tears filled the soft blue eyes despite her efforts to keep them back; for Essie was a brave little girl, and did not often give way to tears.

"Poor!" cried Tremaine, "tis the cry of the world! Poverty is not a crime, though the dull-headed dolts that have sold themselves, body and soul for glittering dross would make it so. Essie, at this moment I would give up all I have in the world, and change places with the poorest workman in New York, if with his poverty I could also buy his honest conscience."

"Why, then, uncle, do you object to my being Oswald's wife?" Essie asked, in astonishment at the unusual vehemence of her uncle's manner.

"Essie, I do not wish to tell you why I object; but I do object. And I ask you to give my son back his promise to be your husband, and to forever crush this love from your heart."

Essie for a moment was silent, busy in thought.

"Why don't you answer, Essie?" exclaimed Tremaine, impatiently; "will you do as I wish?"

"It is so hard to answer you, uncle," Essie replied. "You have always been so good to me, so kind. I have never known any friend in this world but you. You have been father, mother, all to me. You have given me my existence, for your bounty has provided the means by which I live. You have a right to that life. I can not deny it, uncle, and you exert that right; for if I give up Oswald, I give up all that makes my life happy." The tone of the girl was mournful indeed.

"You will give him up, then?" cried Tremaine, hastily.

"If you command me to do so, uncle, I will."

"But I do not command!" exclaimed Tremaine, in despair. "I cannot command. I merely ask it!"

Essie opened her blue eyes wide in astonishment.

"You do not command it?" she said, in amazement.

"No, no; I have promised that I will not force your will in this matter," replied Tremaine, fearing that, after all, his efforts were useless.

"Then you only ask me?" and the blue eyes brightened; "if I cannot do it, you will not be angry with me?"

"No, no, child!" responded Tremaine, sadly, "I cannot be angry with you. Whatever course you take, I believe it is destined by fate. You are but a passive agent in my punishment."

Elsie could not understand the meaning of her uncle's strange words.

"Decide—will you yield to my request?" Tremaine's voice was full of entreaty.

"Uncle, I cannot," and Elsie threw herself on her knees by Tremaine's chair, and gently laid her hands upon his arm, as if in supplication.

"It is fate," murmured Tremaine, looking into the earnest face raised in entreaty. "Poor child, I cannot blame you."

"Oh, uncle!" she cried, "I do not wish to give you pain; perhaps Oswald does not love as well as I. If he wishes me to retract my promise, I will do so, even if it should break my heart."

As a drowning man clutches at straws, so Tremaine seized upon this promise.

The bell summoned the servant.

"Tell Oswald that I wish to see him." The servant retired with the message.

"Vain hope!" Tremaine muttered, to himself; "he will never release her, and the fatal secret must be told."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATAL SECRET.

In a few minutes after the departure of the servant with the message, Oswald entered the parlor library.

"You sent for me, father?" he asked.

Eddie had risen to her feet and stood by the side of Tremaine's chair.

"Yes, Oswald," answered the father, "I did send for you; I have spoken with Eddie, and she is willing to return you your promise."

"What?" cried Oswald, in amazement, while the hot blood flushed into his temples: "do I hear rightly?" Eddie, speak!" he demanded. "Do you wish me to return you your promise? do you wish me to release you?"

"No, Oswald," Eddie answered, "I do not wish it."

"What, then, father, do you mean?" cried Oswald, impetuously.

Eddie is willing to give you a chance to think the matter over. You have both acted hastily. Possibly to-morrow you will change your mind."

"Never, father!" cried the young man, in heat.

"Oswald, I have promised your father that if you wish it, I will return you your promise," said Eddie, looking with anxious eyes into her lover's face; but the glow of joy that she saw there, caused by her words, convinced her that her promise would not be returned.

"Father, your efforts are useless; I will never ask Eddie to release me, and never will I release her. Eddie, you are my promised wife, and come good or bad, I shall hold you to your promise."

Eddie did not answer with her tongue, but with her eyes she thanked Oswald for the words that he had uttered.

Tremaine inwardly groaned in agony of spirit, though outwardly, save in the white lips and deathly pallor of his visage, he gave no sign of emotion.

"Oswald and Eddie, you will not be warned!" he cried; "you will not heed my voice, but blindly rush to despair."

"Father, I can not understand the meaning of your words," answered Oswald; "why you should be so strongly opposed to my wedding Eddie, I know not; but until you give me a reason for that opposition, I will never willingly resign her."

"Eddie," cried Tremaine, in despair, "for the last time I implore you to yield to my wishes and break off this unhappy engagement."

"Oh, uncle!" and Eddie again knelt by Tremaine's chair and gazed up into his face, pleadingly, "do not ask me to break my word or to crush the love that is in my heart! In every thing else, uncle, I will do as you wish—will gladly obey you, and even now—if Oswald will but ask it—for your sake, I will give him back his word, though the act make me wretched hereafter."

"Eddie, I will never ask it!" cried the son, hastily.

"You will know the truth, then!" exclaimed Tremaine, in bitterness of spirit; "you insist upon learning the fatal truth that so vainly I have striven to keep from you."

"Why, father, what do you mean?" asked Oswald, in amazement, while a terrible apprehension of danger filled his heart.

"Uncle, do explain!" pleaded Eddie, while the same feeling of coming danger that hung over Oswald's spirit also laid its chilly fingers upon her.

"I have tried to keep you from loving each other, because your marriage is impossible!" said Tremaine, slowly and in agony.

Oh! how the sin of the past was being avenged. The poisoned chalice was at his lips, placed there by his own hands; sup it he must.

"Impossible!" cried Oswald.

"Impossible!" repeated Eddie.

"Father, what can you mean?" exclaimed the son, who felt as if he was in a terrible dream, the waking from which would be fearful.

"Yes, it is impossible!" repeated the father.

"Why impossible?"

Both Oswald and Eddie looked at Tremaine with the same expression upon their faces that prisoners being tried for their lives might have while gazing at the judge who held in his hands their fate.

"Why—" and the anguish of the father was terrible indeed. "Heaven forgive me—I must speak the truth even though it kills! Oswald and Eddie, your marriage is impossible, for you are brother and sister! Eddie, you are my child!"

The fatal-fatal truth came upon the lovers with crushing force.

Oswald reeled back, and but for the friendly support of a chair would have fallen, while Eddie still kneeling by the chair of her uncle, looked into his face with a stony glare, as though the awful words had stricken her into marble.

Tremaine could not bear the fixed look of the blue eyes that were wont to be so soft and loving in their gaze. Hastily he rose from his chair, and raising Eddie from her knees, folded her to his heart.

"Eddie!" he exclaimed in anguish, "my poor child, can you forgive me? I have tried to be a father to you, a father in all but the name, and now, because I am your father, I have blighted all your life. My poor child, can you forgive me?"

Eddie answered not. Her head was in a whirl. Strange sounds were in her ears; the terrible truth had stunned her.

"Eddie," cried the father, anxiously, finding that she did not answer, "why do you not speak? Call me father, and tell me that you forgive me, or I shall go mad!"

With a weary air, Eddie raised her head, passed her hand slowly across her forehead, as though she had just awakened from a frightful dream and was recalling her scattered and bewildered senses.

"Father—Oswald," she murmured, and then with a sigh she fainted, and but for the arms of Tremaine would have fallen to the floor.

"Ring the bell, Oswald, quick! she has fainted!" cried the father, in haste.

Like one in a maze, Oswald staggered rather than walked to the table, and touched the bell.

"Oh! can I ever be forgiven for this misery?" murmured Tremaine, in anguish, as he looked upon the haggard features of his son and then upon the pale face of the fainting girl that he held in his arms.

The servant entered in answer to the bell.

"Send Mrs. Harris" (the housekeeper of the Tremaine mansion) "here at once. Tell her that Miss Troy has fainted; quick!"

With eager haste, the servant obeyed the order. In a few minutes, that seemed hours to the anxious father, the servant returned with Mrs. Harris.

"We had better take her to her room, Mr. Tremaine," said the housekeeper, her experienced eye quickly perceiving that Eddie's faint was a severe one.

"Wait, Oswald, I will return in a moment," said Tremaine, and then with his own hands he bore the fainting girl to her room—which was upon the same floor as the library—and laid her upon the bed.

"Do not leave her, Mrs. Harris," he said; "and if you think there is danger, send for Doctor Dornton at once."

Then Tremaine, leaving the helpless girl in the care of the housekeeper, returned to the library, where he found Oswald sitting motionless by the table in exactly the same position that he had left him.

The shock of the awful disclosure had stunned the young man. He had grown five years older in looks in the few minutes that had elapsed since the knowledge of the fatal secret had thrown such a cloud upon his brain.

Tremaine carefully closed the door behind him. He did not wish witnesses to the interview that was about to take place.

The father was grieved beyond expression as he beheld the change that had taken place in his son's face; in that face which an hour before had been so full of life, of hope, of joy; that face that had so proudly bid defiance to the world. Now, the cloud of black despair had settled down upon it. The hope, the joy, were gone, and in their place sat desolation.

"Oswald, my son!" cried Tremaine.

"Father," replied Oswald, slowly, raising his head to meet his father's gaze as though he had lost all in the world that made life dear.

"Oswald, can you forgive me, that I have so long kept this secret from you, and then blindly laid in your path the snare that has made wretched your life?"

"Do not speak of it, father; it is my unhappy fortune. You warned me, but I was blind and reckless. I am justly punished for not heeding your words. But, father, I have loved Eddie from the moment that she first entered this house. It is my fate to be wretched."

The tone of Oswald was one of settled despair.

"Oswald," said Tremaine, sadly, "words, I know, cannot comfort you, yet I owe you an explanation in regard to Eddie. It is but right that you should know her history; know, also, of my sin."

"Father, I do not ask this confidence," said Oswald.

"It is yours by right," answered Tremaine. "The consequences of my fault have not only fallen upon my head, but upon yours also; therefore, listen to me."

Tremaine seated himself, and after a moment's pause, as if to collect his thoughts, began:

"Some eighteen years ago I had occasion to visit the town of New Bedford. While there, I became acquainted with a young and pretty girl, the wife of a sailor. He was the captain of a whale-ship, and at that time he was absent on a cruise. He was not expected to return for three years. This lady and I met in society very often. I soon discovered that I loved her, and that she returned my passion. This was my sin, for I had tried to make her love me, knowing that she was legally another's. She did not love her husband, although he was young, handsome and rich. She had been forced, by her folks, who were poor, to marry him. In her heart she hated the chains that bound her to his side, and yet, she was a good, pure woman, despite this passion, which was only guilty in thought, not in nature. I went to her house in the afternoon—I was to depart at five—to bid her farewell. She cried bitter tears at the thought that we were forced to separate, for she loved me, Oswald, as well and as purely as ever woman loved a man. I had thought, Oswald, that I had loved your mother, but the first passion did not burn with the intense flame of the second."

"Just as I had shaken hands with her for the last time, a telegraphic dispatch arrived from the owner of the vessel of which her husband was captain. The dispatch announced that the ship had been lost at sea, and all on board had perished.

"She was free, and with a scream, half-joy, half-sorrow, she sunk fainting upon my breast. It did not require much persuasion to induce her to accompany me at once to New York, and there we were to be married."

"We arrived in New York the next morning, and the first thing that I read in the morning paper was the news that her husband, the sailor, escaped the wreck and had been saved."

"The evil was done; her reputation was compromised by her flight with me. All would have believed her guilty if she had been as innocent and as pure as holy angels."

"One course only remained, and that was to apply at once for a divorce. That course was adopted. I procured lodgings for my destined wife; in those lodgings Eddie was born."

Oswald had listened to the story attentively.

Tremaine paused for a moment; the memory of the past was painful, indeed.

"Time passed on; we heard nothing of the sailor husband, and I began to think that he never would trouble us, or at least not until the divorce was granted—and divorces then were not procured as easily as they are now. But one terrible, stormy night, the sailor discovered his wife's retreat, and while he was reproaching her bitterly for what she had done, the lightning, flashing in through the open window, struck her dead at his feet."

Oswald shuddered at the fearful story, while for a moment Tremaine paused in deep agitation at the remembrance of the terrible tragedy.

"And Eddie, father?" he asked; "how did you obtain possession of her? I should have thought that he, the husband, would have taken her."

"No, he left the house without disturbing the infant; possibly in his anger he had not noticed it. I gave a newsboy, who had witnessed the terrible scene that ended in the death of Eddie's mother, a hundred dollars to procure the child for me."

"And what was the name of this woman and her husband?" asked Oswald.

"The sailor's name was Walter Averill, her name was Christine."

A loud cry, seemingly of one stricken with mortal anguish, broke upon the stillness of the library. Amazed, Tremaine and his son started to their feet. Then came the sound of a heavy fall.

"What can be the matter?" cried Tremaine.

"It came from the closet in this room!" exclaimed Oswald.

Then both the men hurried to the closet door at the further end of the apartment and hastily opened it. And there, in a dead swoon upon the floor of the closet, lay the old man, Whitehead, the secretary.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE "MARQUIS" LOVED EDDIE TROY.

THE closet in which the old man lay was quite a large one, and was used by Mr. Tremaine as a receptacle for all his papers.

"He was evidently in here when we entered the room," said Tremaine, "and not wishing to disturb us, remained an involuntary listener. The close air of the closet probably caused him to faint."

It was plain that Tremaine had guessed the truth, for the gas was burning in the closet, the old man held, tightly clutched in his hand, a bundle of leases.

"Do you think that he can have overheard what we have been saying?" asked Oswald.

"It is probable," answered Tremaine; "but I do not fear his mentioning it. He is not a gossip."

Then the two carried the old man out into the library and placed him in a chair. All efforts to revive the secretary were fruitless. But that they could feel that his heart still beat slowly, they would have thought him dead.

Tremaine summoned the servants, the old man was removed to his room, undressed and put to bed, and a messenger dispatched for the doctor.

Doctor Dornton came in haste, and after examining the old man announced that he was laboring under a serious attack of brain fever. Before the arrival of the doctor the old man had recovered his speech, but not his senses; his words were wild and disordered. The doctor, listening attentively, could only catch one single sentence that seemed to have meaning in it; and that sentence the sick man muttered over and over again.

"Ace—black—all black—a spade to dig her grave!"

Such were the disjointed words of the old man.

The doctor scratched the side of his nose reflectively, a sign in him of deep thought.

"If he were a young man, I should say that he had been gambling; but, no, that isn't possible. There's a woman mixed up in it somehow; nothing wonderful in that though; women are mixed up in every thing in this world. 'Ace,' and 'a spade to dig her grave.' Well, it's a mystery." And the doctor returned to the library.

"What is the matter with him, doctor?" asked Tremaine.

"A brain fever."

Father and son looked at each other in astonishment.

"He must have received some great shock, either physical or mental," continued the doctor. "Has any accident happened to him?"

"No; he was in the closet yonder when Oswald and I entered the room, and apparently not wishing to disturb us, kept silent, for we had no idea of his presence until he swooned and fell from his chair to the floor. I supposed that the closeness of the air of the closet caused his faintness."

"It's a most astonishing case. Never, in the whole course of my medical experience, have I known of a case of brain fever produced by a simple fainting-fit caused by bad air. Could he overhear your conversation in the closet?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Tremaine.

"Did you touch upon any matters likely to interest him in the least?"

"No."

The doctor looked puzzled.

"Well, I confess, I can not understand it. If, as it appears, he has received no accident of a physical nature, then he must have received some strong mental shock, and the brain, gentlemen, is a ticklish organ to deal with. I feel quite interested in this gentleman's case. By the way, have you any idea how old he is?"

"Well, sixty, I should think," replied Tremaine, wondering at the question.

"You judge by his face and hair, eh?" said the doctor, quickly.

"Yes," answered Tremaine.

"He does look like sixty in the face, and yet I never saw such an arm as he has on a man of sixty in my life," said the doctor, decidedly.

"You think he is younger, then?"

"I don't know what to think," replied the doctor, doubtfully. "In the first place, here's a man goes into a raging brain fever—clean out of his head, apparently as mad as a March hare—simply because he happens to be shut up in a closet for a few minutes. Then again, this very same man has the frame and sinews of a Hercules, and an arm that would do credit to a prize-fighter. Not the sort of a man at all to be affected by any common accident. I feel quite an interest in his case." And with these words the doctor departed.

Tremaine and his son, thrilled to the heart by the affliction that had fallen so heavily upon them, felt but little interest in the words of the doctor, or in the cause of the secretary's illness, and the subject was instantly dismissed from their minds.

Essie had recovered from her swoon, undressed, gone to bed, and slept herself to sleep.

This was the first great affliction that had ever fallen upon the young girl, and amid her tears she asked the question of herself, if any others had been thus afflicted? And fully satisfied that death alone could relieve her misery, she sobbed herself to sleep. In sleep she forgot her sorrows. Ah, Essie! time is one great slumber in which we forget all things. Time cures the deepest sorrow, heals the most terrible wounds. In years we find forgetfulness; it is the Lethe of the fable in which we drown remembrance.

After a restless night to all the principal members of the Tremaine household, morning came.

The secretary, Whitehead, was still unconscious. The doctor, who called early to see his patient, pronounced his case to be very dangerous.

ous and declared that the chances were against his recovering.

About ten in the morning Tremaine was somewhat astonished at receiving a message that a gentleman desired to see him in person on particular business.

"What sort of a looking person is it?" he asked.

"A young man, quite a gentleman, sir," the servant answered.

"Did he give his name?"

"No, sir. I asked him for his name, but he said that it was useless for him to give it, because he was a stranger to you," answered the servant.

"Some genteel sharper, I suppose," said Tremaine. "John, tell this person to write his business. I am not in the habit of granting interviews to strangers."

The servant left the room, but in a few minutes he returned with a large card in his hand and a broad grin upon his face.

"He says, sir," said John, holding out the card, "that if you'll please to look at this card you'll understand the business that he comes about."

Tremaine took the card, considerably astonished at the strange message.

On the card was written "810 Fifth avenue."

"Why that is my address," Tremaine said. And then turning the card over, in search of some solution to this odd mystery, the ace of spades stared him in the face.

In an instant the recollection of the card he had given Christine sixteen years before flashed upon him; the card that had indeed proved an omen of evil.

"What can this mean?" Tremaine muttered to himself, with a puzzled look. "Can this person have any connection with the past? Well, show him up, John," he said, aloud.

The servant withdrew, but in a few minutes returned conducting the "Marquis," who was the person who had sent the mysterious message.

"You may withdraw, John," said Tremaine to the servant, who stood discreetly at the door, waiting for orders.

The servant bowed, and left the room, closing the door behind him.

"Well, sir, your business with me?" asked Tremaine, gazing with curiosity into the handsome face of the young man, and detecting in that face a strange resemblance to some other face that he had seen. But who the possessor of that face was he could not remember.

"That will require a short explanation, sir," said the "Marquis," with easy politeness.

"Proceed, sir," said Tremaine, vainly endeavoring to recall where he had seen the young man's face before, or if not his face, the face that it so strongly resembled.

"Do you remember the year 1852?" asked the "Marquis."

Tremaine started. His thought then was right; his visitor had some connection with the events of that terrible night.

"Yes, sir, I remember; but to what particular part of the year have you reference?"

"The night of the 20th of September."

Despite his self-control, Tremaine shuddered.

"I am about to speak of a terrible event that happened on that night," continued the young man; "of a woman killed by lightning and a child rendered motherless."

"Well, sir, what has this to do with me?" Tremaine asked. He saw plainly that by some means the young man had gained a knowledge of the events of the dreadful night, the memory of which, even now, after the long lapse of years, was full of pain to him. Yet he felt sure that his strange visitor could not possibly possess any clew to connect him with those terrible events.

"Only that you are the father of the motherless child."

Tremaine stared in astonishment. There was no trace of hesitation in the stranger's voice as he made the charge. He spoke like one fully confident.

"Possibly you have some proof of what you assert, or it will be difficult for you to make people believe your story," Tremaine said, slowly. He felt sure that he had guessed the object of the stranger's visit. By some unaccountable means he had become possessed of the history of that terrible night's transactions, and had come to levy black mail as the price of silence.

"I see, sir," said Catterton, very politely, and with great respect in his manner, "that you do not understand why I have taken the liberty to call upon you. There is only one person in the world that I wish to impress with the belief that I speak the truth, and that person is yourself."

"Indeed!" Tremaine was bewildered.

"Yes, sir, and you know that I speak the truth when I say that you are the father of the girl known as Essie and who is the daughter of Christine Averill. You will not deny this, when I tell you that I am the newsboy that placed the child in your arms that night, and who received a hundred dollars for that service. I followed you that night with the

intent to find out who and what you were. I did not know your name, though I did know where you resided, for I heard the lady read the address on the card after you had written it. That is what prompted me—when you refused to see me just now—to send you a *fac-simile* of that card. You see, sir, I came prepared to be refused. As I have said, that night I tracked you—with a bad intent, I own, sir—until I was thrown off the scent by your taking the cars at the Hudson River depot. But the very first thing the next morning I came here and found out your name. Since these events sixteen years have passed—"

"It is useless for me to deny the truth of what you have said!" cried Tremaine, interrupting him. "I suppose that your visit to me this morning is for the purpose of levying blackmail; you wish me to buy your silence!"

"No, sir," returned the "Marquis," firmly, but respectfully, "I don't wish you to do anything of the kind. True, I might come to you, and say: I know all about the night of September 20th, 1852. I know that this girl whom you call Essie Troy is in reality, Essie Averill. That she is your daughter; and that, possibly, if I were to make that fact known among your acquaintances, it might create considerable talk and subject the young lady—if not you—to some mortification. But I have no intention, sir, of doing anything of the sort. I have called back the past, simply to show you that I was one of the actors in that past. I did you a service then; true, I was paid for it; but you are well aware, sir, that if I had asked you a thousand dollars for that infant you would have given it. Of course you are too old a man of the world, not to guess that I have some other object in making this call than simply to tell you that I am acquainted with a little of your past history. I own, frankly, that I have a favor to ask of you; but if you see fit not to grant that favor, I shall leave this house, take the secret concerning Miss Essie with me, and keep it securely locked in my own breast as I have done for sixteen years."

Tremaine looked at the pale, quiet face of the "Marquis" with astonishment. That a man, who was evidently an adventurer, should possess such a secret, and yet not attempt to extort money as the price of silence, was indeed a wonder.

"Sir, I can hardly understand this riddle," said Tremaine.

"Do not try to," quietly replied the "Marquis," "let it remain a riddle. My motives for acting thus, will probably never be known. I love the girl, sir, that you have reared—whom you call Essie Troy—better than I do anything else in this world, better than I do myself—and self-love you know is powerful, sir. But I would sooner give my right hand than have a single hour of gloom fall upon her young life."

"You are speaking very strangely, sir," cried Tremaine, in amazement.

"Yes, sir," returned the "Marquis," "because you do not know the reason that actuates me. That reason will never be known to any one in the world. Suffice it that it exists, and that I shall never do harm by word or deed to Miss Essie."

"And now, sir, what is this favor that you wish at my hands?"

"The loan, sir, of a thousand dollars—not a gift, mind, but a loan to be repaid. My way of life, sir, does not suit me. With the money I have, in addition to the thousand dollars loaned by you, I can start a good business and earn an honest living."

"But what assurance have I that this money will be repaid, and that this is not a black-mailing device?" answered Tremaine.

"At present, nothing but my word; but the moment I start in trade—I'm going to open a small book-store on Broadway—I'll give you a mortgage on my stock."

For a moment Tremaine looked into the face of the "Marquis," and in that face he saw written honesty.

"I'll do it!" he said, "and trust you."

And when Daniel Catterton, the "Marquis," left the house of Tremaine, he carried with him a check for a thousand dollars.

The "Marquis" was in the right road after all.

CHAPTER XIX.

"OLD TIMES ROCKS."

IOLA had been in the paper-box manufactory three days, and was as happy as happy could be. Each evening the "Marquis" called to see her, and spent an hour or two in the little parlor. Catterton could not understand what made the hours pass so pleasantly and so swiftly when he was in Iola's company. The girl did not try to understand. It was enough for her that she was happy in his society, she did not question why.

The evening of the third day had come. Iola descended the long flights of stairs that led from the manufactory to the street, light and joyous as a bird on a bright May morning, and took her way home.

Iola little thought that evil eyes were watching her, that brutal hearts were laying snares for her feet.

On the other side of the street, in a doorway, stood two men; one of them is well known to us, it is William Thompson, otherwise known as English Bill. His companion was a rough-looking fellow, not quite so burly in form as Bill. He was known as Curly Rocks, and sometimes familiarly called by his associates, "Old Times Rocks," probably on account of his long association with the roughs of Water street, he having been brought up from childhood in that delightful region.

"That's her, curse her!" cried Bill, savagely.

Accident had revealed to Bill Iola's working-place.

Ever since the girl's sudden and unaccountable disappearance Bill had hunted high and low for the missing one. His search had been fruitless until happening with Curly Rocks to be passing down Canal street, he saw, to his great delight, Iola come out of the building in which was situated her work-shop.

"Is that so?" asked Rocks, who was not acquainted with Iola.

"And now I've got my eyes on her, blast her, I'll soon have her in my hands again," Bill exclaimed, with ferocious delight.

"Why don't you go right over, take her by the nape of the neck and snake her off home, say?" exclaimed Curly, who was an extremely practical ruffian.

"An' have her holler blue murder an' then have the perlice come down onto us, an' take us both off to the station!" returned Bill.

"Well, what of that?" cried Curly; "she's your gal, ain't she? Ain't you got a right to do wot you like with her? Wot's the use of bein' a father if you hain't got a right to take your gal home when she runs away from you, I'd like to know?"

"Well, I don't want to have any fuss," replied Bill; "I'd rather git hold of the young brat quietly. Besides I want to find out who dressed her up this way. She ain't gone to the devil, as I thought, 'cos she wouldn't be a-workin' if she was. Let's foller her an' see where she goes to."

And so the two roughs started in pursuit of Iola, being careful, however, not to betray to her she was followed.

Iola went straight on to her home as usual.

Bill and Curly saw her enter the door of the boarding-house.

The game was tree!

"I'd like to know where she got all those new toggs!" growled Bill.

"She looks as gay as a pink!" cried Curly, admiringly.

"I'll soon change her looks, let me git my hands on her ag'in!" said Bill, savagely.

"Well, now, old man, wot's the programme, eh?" asked Curly.

"To git hold of her as soon as possible," returned Bill, fiercely.

"Yes, but how are ye a-goin' fer do it, 'cos I rather fancy that the gal won't come with you, herself, if she knows it; not much you know," and Curly put his tongue in his cheek, significantly.

"That's so, curse her!" cried Bill, in a rage. "let me git hold on her ag'in, I'll take the devil out of her—I'll tame her!"

"Yes, but how are you a-goin' to git hold on her! Unless you walks up to the front door, rings the bell an' says, 'My name's William Thompson, you've got my gal here an' I wants her.' An' if the young 'un should happen to reply, 'Don't you wish you may git it,' or, 'Will you hold your breath till I go with you,' or any other perlite observation, what are you a-goin' to do about it? unless you calls in the perlice for to make her go with you," observed the playful and sagacious Curly.

"You just leave me alone, I'll fix it somehow," said Bill, "but I'd like to know where she got that new dress. Dresses don't lay round loose in the streets of New York."

"That's so," chimed in Curly.

"She would never have run off unless some one told her to, an' fixed a place for her to go to. I'd give something to find out all about it," said Bill, thoughtfully.

"Evenin' News, only one cent!" yelled a boy's voice close at Curly's elbow. "Hello! buy a paper, Bill!" continued the voice.

The roughs turned and beheld the newsboy called Shorty.

"No, I don't want no paper," gruffly said Bill.

"Say, you don't trust, Shorty, do yer?" asked Curly, who had a keen sense of the humorous.

"Trust? what do you take me for, say?" demanded Shorty. "I does a cash business, regular, 'cos it's too much trouble to keep books."

Bill was deeply cogitating how he should learn all the particulars regarding Iola, when an idea struck him.

"Say, Shorty," said Bill, "would you like to make a dollar?"

"Would I?" exclaimed the boy, his eyes gleaming. "Oh, no! not much, not for Joe! Just you show me how I kin make a dollar, an' see me go fur it."

"Well, my gal, Io', is over in that house there—the brick boarding-house. Now you just find out all about her that you can; who

brought her there, who comes to see her, an' I'll give you a dollar."

"Yer will?"

"Yes."

"Why you are a reg'lar rounder, you are! Just you wait here a minit and I'll find out all 'bout it. I sells papers to the cook over there, I does," and with these parting words, Shorty ran across the street, and disappeared down the basement-steps.

"I've got her!" cried Bill, with ferocious glee; "I'll have her in my hands afore this night's over; see if I don't!"

CHAPTER XX.

ENGLISH BILL'S "LITTLE GAME."

In about ten minutes the newsboy returned. He had found out all that the cook knew in regard to Iola, and that was, that she had only been in the boarding-house some few days, and that a young gentleman—some relation, the cook supposed—called upon her every evening at eight o'clock.

"Wot was the name of the cove?" asked Curly.

"Catterton," answered the boy.

"Oh, split me!" cried Curly, in astonishment. "What's the matter?" asked Bill. He had forgotten the name of the "Marquis," accustomed as he was only to call him by his sporting name.

"Why, that's 'Dan the Devil,' the fellow wot you got arter the other night!" cried Curly.

"The devil it is!" exclaimed Bill.

"That's so," answered the other.

"Then, he's the one that took the gal away. I'll be even with him yet!" and Bill's manner showed plainly how deeply he hated the young man.

"Say, old hoss, you promised me a dollar!" cried the newsboy.

"Here it is," and Bill handed the note to Shorty.

"I say, Shorty, ain't you a-goin' to treat?" asked Curly.

"Does your mother know you're out?" was the ambiguous response of the newsboy; and, without waiting for an answer to his question, he darted up the street and was soon busy crying his papers.

"Wot's your little game?" asked Curly.

"Just you wait a little while an' you'll see," replied Bill.

"I'll keep the hair on my head," by which expressive sentence, Curly intimated that he would wait.

"Say, Rocks, do you think you can play a perlice detective?" Bill asked.

"Well, I don't know; I ought to. I've seen a good deal of them," returned Curly, with a grin.

"You kin do it, I know. I'll tell you wot to say as we go along."

"Where are you goin'?"

"Up to Chatham Square. I want a hack, an' Patsy Duke stands up there. He's all right, he is. Say, will you join in my little game?"

"You bet!" Curly replied, using the slang term from the far Pacific coast.

And so the pair of knaves walked slowly up to Chatham Square, Bill explaining his "little game" as they walked along.

Iola had just finished supper when the door-bell rung, and Mrs. Wiggins, going to the door, returned with the information that a man wanted to see Miss Thompson.

Iola could not imagine who it was, but went at once to the door. Upon perceiving the rough-looking man that stood there she hesitated in some little alarm. But as the landlady, Mrs. Wiggins, was close behind her, she knew that there could be no danger.

"Are you Miss Thompson?" asked the man, in quite a polite tone for one so rough as he.

"Yes, sir," answered Iola.

"Well, miss, I am a detective officer; my name is Jones. There's a friend of yours—Mr. Catterton—got into trouble 'bout assaultin' a feller on Broadway, named English Bill, the other night, an' he wants you to come up to the station an' testify for him, 'cos he said that you see'd the whole fuss."

"What will they do to Mr. Catterton?" asked Iola, in dismay at the thought of any danger coming to her friend, and on her account too.

"Oh, nothin' miss; you kin git him right out of it just by telling what you know," answered Mr. "Jones."

"Shall I have to go to the police-station?" asked Iola.

"Yes, right away, too. Mr. Catterton sent a hack for you. It won't take ten minutes to fix the fuss up all right."

"What shall I do, Mrs. Wiggins?" said Iola, feeling a doubt, despite the words of the stranger.

"Why, go, of course, my dear!" cried the landlady, quickly, no thought of evil entering her mind. "Gool gracious! Mr. Catterton is such a nice young man!"

"Yes, ma'am, he's a regular brick!" said Mr. "Jones."

"Can this lady go with me?" asked Iola, still feeling a doubt in her mind.

"In course," cried the detective, quickly; "come along, ma'am."

Assured at last, Iola hurried up-stairs for her hat and cloak, while Mrs. Wiggins rushed hastily for her bonnet and shawl.

"He is in danger, and on my account!" cried Iola, as with trembling hands she threw the cloak over her shoulders; "how good he has been to me!"

Then Iola ran down-stairs—her mind now filled with only one thought, the danger of the "Marquis."

The dusk of the evening was upon the street, and the gas was being lighted in the stores.

Iola and Mrs. Wiggins went out through the door. In the street stood a hack.

"Mr. Brown, my pardner, 's inside, ma'am," said the detective, as he opened the hack door for Iola to enter. She, in the dim light, saw the dark form of a man sitting on the front seat, apparently looking out of the opposite window, for his face was turned from her.

Lightly Iola jumped into the hack. The detective turned to give his hand to Mrs. Wiggins, when the hack suddenly drove on at full speed, and left Mr. "Jones" and Mrs. Wiggins standing on the curbstone.

"Hallo!" shouted the detective, but the hack-driver drove on without looking behind him or paying the slightest attention to the call.

"Well, of all the stupid brutes!" said Mr. "Jones," apparently deeply disgusted.

"Whatever shall we do?" asked Mrs. Wiggins.

"Why, we can walk to the office, ma'am; it's only up in Harlem."

"Harlem! walk to Harlem!" cried the astonished Mrs. Wiggins.

"Why no, of course not. We can take a horse-car."

"Well, I don't know as there is really any need of my going," said Mrs. Wiggins, thoughtfully. "I s'pose you'll see that the young lady comes home all safe!"

"Oh, in course," responded the detective, with urbanity, "in course I'll bring her home all right. Don't you worry 'bout that, ma'am. I'm very sorry that you couldn't go, but I'll never employ that brute of a driver ag'in. Good-night, ma'am," and the detective, Mr. "Jones," hastened off.

"Well, I never," muttered Mrs. Wiggins, as she returned, disconsolate, to the house; "the impudence and carelessness of them hack-drivers is wonderful. I don't see how people stands it." And the good lady somewhat relieved her mind by telling the boarders how she was left standing on the pavement; what a real gentleman the detective, Mr. Jones, was, and how sorry he felt that she had been left.

About eight o'clock the door-bell rung. Mrs. Wiggins hastened to answer it, expecting that it was Iola returned. When she opened the door she discovered to her surprise that the person who had rung the bell was Mr. Catterton, and that he was alone.

"Well, I'm glad you've got out!" cried Mrs. Wiggins, with a smile of welcome; "but where is Miss Iola?"

Catterton looked at the lady in amazement.

"Why, how should I know?" he asked.

"Hasn't she come back with you?" asked Mrs. Wiggins, no less astonished than her visitor.

"Come back with me!" exclaimed Catterton; "why no, of course not. How could she?"

Mrs. Wiggins now stared at the young man with wonder. Her first thought was that the "Marquis" had been drinking, but if he had, he showed no signs of it.

"Oh, I see!" cried Mrs. Wiggins, a light breaking in upon her clouded mind. "She's coming in the coach!"

"The coach!" cried Catterton, in amazement.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wiggins, perfectly satisfied that she had hit upon the true solution of the mystery; "but how did you get out, and why didn't you come with Miss Iola?"

"How did I get out?" repeated Catterton, beginning to think that Mrs. Wiggins was slightly insane.

"Yes; and why didn't you come back with Miss Iola?" repeated Mrs. Wiggins.

"I can't understand you!" replied the "Marquis," not able to make sense out of her questions.

"Well, I'm sure I speak plain enough!" exclaimed Mrs. Wiggins, considerably astonished, and beginning to be a little indignant.

"My dear madam!" exclaimed Catterton, plainly seeing that there was a misunderstanding somewhere. "what on earth do you mean by asking me how I got out, and why I didn't come back with Miss Iola?"

"Why, out of the station-house in Harlem!" Mrs. Wiggins felt considerably bewildered.

Catterton felt sure now that Mrs. Wiggins was out of her head.

"I've not been in any station-house in Harlem or anywhere else!" exclaimed the "Marquis." "I haven't been in Harlem for a year."

"Not been in Harlem!" cried Mrs. Wiggins, at the top of her voice.

"No!" exclaimed Catterton, in astonishment.

"Hain't you been arrested?" in the same high key.

"No!"

"Oh, Lor'!" and Mrs. Wiggins threw up her hands in dismay.

The loud tone of the conversation had brought the boarders in alarm out of their rooms, and anxious heads were peeping over the stair-railing, curious to discover the meaning of the unusual noise.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Catterton, for the first time beginning to be alarmed, and having a dim fear that possibly something might have happened to Iola.

"Oh, Lor'" repeated Mrs. Wiggins, half fainting in her excitement; "a gent come as said that his name was Jones and he was a detective officer, an' he asked after Miss Thompson, quite polite like, an' he said as how you had been arrested for 'saultin' somebody, an' she asked me for to go with her, an' we got our things on, an' she got into the coach, an' no sooner had she got in, than the coachman—the villain! hanging's too good for him—he drove off an' left me an' the detective, as said his name was Jones, a-standin' on the blessed sidewalk!"

"Is it possible?" cried Catterton, almost bewildered at this sudden blow, for the whole scheme was clear to him in an instant. He saw plainly that Iola had been abducted.

"Possible it is, an' quite correct!" cried Mrs. Wiggins; "an' the gent as said he was a detective, and his name was Jones, was quite polite, an' said he'd bring Miss Iola back all safe."

"This is some mistake," said Catterton. He did not care to enter into particulars, which could do no good and might do mischief. "Some one else has probably been mistaken for me. I'll go and see about it at once."

And Catterton at once departed, leaving the Wiggins household in a state of great excitement.

The "Marquis" knew full well that the abductor of Iola could be no other than English Bill.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW ALLY FOR THE "MARQUIS."

THE "Marquis" hastened at once to his room on Broadway; there he found Jim, and astonished that worthy by giving him a full account of the abduction of the girl that had been rescued from misery.

When he had finished his story, Jim uttered but two words:

"English Bill!"

Catterton was struck by the coincidence. Both he and Jim, without consultation, had picked out the same man as being at the bottom of the girl's abduction.

"Just what I think, Jim!" cried the "Marquis." "By some means this ruffian has learned of Iola's retreat, and laid this scheme to get her into his hands again. It has succeeded only too well. But, let this ruffian beware, for I'll follow her, even though the path leads to certain death."

Jim had never seen his friend—who was usually so quiet—so agitated as now.

"Suppose this brute—for he is a brute, you know—should 'alf kill the girl for runnin' away from 'im when he gets 'er into 'is 'ands?" asked Jim.

"If he does, it will be the worst day's work that he has ever done in all his life!" exclaimed Catterton, and the angry glitter of his eye told that his blood was fully up.

"I suppose it would be no use to apply to the police?" observed Jim.

"No; this brute is her father, and he would plead that as a right to do as he pleased with the girl, even though his treatment was crushing the life out of her inch by inch."

"Vy, 'Marquis,' I never saw you so excited before!" exclaimed Jim, in astonishment.

"Jim, I'm at a white heat with passion. I love this girl—that is, I love her like a sister! With the exception of one other, it's the only love of my life. And when I think of her being in the power of this blackguard—this brute in the image of a man—it makes the blood boil in my veins. When I think that she will be utterly at his mercy, that that little form may quiver under his blows without any one being near to save her from him, it makes me wild with passion, and, Jim, I don't get wild, very often."

"That's so," said the Englishman, "but what are we to do? I'm with you, you know, tooth and nail!"

"Why, in the first place visit that den in Water street where we went the other night—"

"Yes, but we'll get our blasted 'eads smashed, you know," interrupted Jim.

"We'll get a couple of wigs, and I'll shave myself clean, and with our old clothes and a slouch hat pulled down over our eyes, I think we can go all through Water street without our disguise being discovered."

"All right, my noble dook! As you say here in Hamerica, 'you can count me hin'!" cried the Englishman.

"We'll go the dance-house first, where we were the other night, though I hardly believe that Bill will take her there. But I have an idea that if we run across that newsboy—the one that turned off the gas so cleverly the other day that we can probably hire him to

search for Iola. He will not be suspected, and can penetrate into places that would baffle our efforts or the efforts of any member of the detective police."

"I say, 'Marquis,' you've got a 'ead on your shoulders, you 'ave!" cried Jim, in admiration.

"It will pass in a crowd, Jim," responded the young man.

Then the two prepared for the nocturnal adventure.

At a costumer's, a few blocks from his room, Catterton procured a couple of wigs—nice brown curly ones. Then returning to the room, the two dressed themselves in the same old suits that they had worn on the night when they made their visit to the notorious dance-house.

Then Catterton shaved off his mustache and imperial, Jim darkened his eyebrows, and putting on the wigs, their disguise was perfect.

"Vy, we look just like a couple of London 'cracksmen' (burglars) hout of work!" Jim exclaimed, after he and the "Marquis" had completed their toilet.

"I think we'll pass muster even in Water street," replied the "Marquis."

"Vy, our hown mothers wouldn't know us!"

"It is the eyes of hate that we are to de-

cieve, not those of love," observed the "Marquis."

"Vell, it's a toss-hup which is the sharpest, you know," said the Londoner.

"It won't take us long to find out whether the girl is in the house in the rear of the saloon or not. We are already familiar with the way, and if any one interferes with me in my search, I sha'n't hesitate to use my revolver."

"Neither shall I," returned Jim, coolly. "I hadmire you Hamericans for one think—when ever you gets into a rumpuss you're halway very quick on the trigger."

"The first blow is a great advantage in any kind of a contest, Jim," said the "Marquis."

"Has you Hamericans say, 'your 'ead is level?'"

"Come, let's travel."

And so, with their lives in their hands, as it were, the "Marquis" and Jim started for the Water street dance-house.

The two arrived in front of the dance-house without incident worthy of mention occurring on their passage thither.

In front of the dance-house they found the newsboy, Shorty, that being the usual resort of that enterprising young gentleman after he had finished selling his papers.

"See here, my young friend," said the "Marquis," beckoning the boy away from the circle of light thrown out by the illuminated windows of the saloon, "I want to have a talk with you."

"Look a-here!" responded this brilliant specimen of the "street Arabs" of New York, "I charges a quarter for to look at me, I does; so shell out!" The newsboy imagined that the two were countrymen seeing the sights, and of course were "flats"—the term applied by the sharpers of the great city to all of the genus countryman.

"How would you like to make a dollar?" asked the "Marquis."

Shorty looked at the roughly-dressed stranger in amazement.

"Say! You don't want to fool round me now, I tell yer!"

Shorty was indignant; he did not relish being joked with; and the idea of earning a dollar was entirely too large for him to swallow.

"My respected young friend, I haven't the least idea of fooling with you," said Catterton, quietly. "I'm going to offer you a chance to make a dollar, and with very little trouble."

"Is that so, sport?" asked the boy, eagerly, yet still with considerable doubt in his mind.

"Yes."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes, honest Injun," replied the "Marquis."

"Just you tell me how?"

"I will. Do you remember me and my friend here?"

The boy took a good look at the two, and though he was blessed with an extremely good memory, yet, owing to the excellent disguises worn by the "Marquis" and his companion, he did not recognize them.

"I never see'd you afore," he said.

"Oh, yes, you have. Do you remember turning off the gas in this dance-house here about four nights ago?"

"Who said I turned off the gas?" cried Shorty, beginning to be alarmed, and all ready to take to his heels at the first sign of danger, for he began to have a suspicion that the two strangers might be some friends of English Bill, and the newsboy, knowing very well that if that worthy or any of his gang had found out that it was he who had turned off the gas, and thus secured the escape of the two men that they marked as their prey, it would go hard with him.

The "Marquis" perceived the alarm of the boy.

"Do not fear," he said. "We are friends, and mean you no harm. We are the two men that English Bill and his gang attacked in the saloon, and whom you assisted to save."

"Why, you don't say so?" cried Shorty, in wonder. "Say, are you detectives?"

However much the "street Arabs" may despise and hate the regular police force, yet that hatred does not extend to the detectives, whom they regard as heroes. Seeing the two strangers evidently disguised, the newsboy instantly thought they must be detectives.

"Well, not exactly," replied Catterton, "although at present we are doing a little in that line."

"And you want me for to help you?" asked Shorty, eagerly, jumping to conclusions.

"Yes; we need your assistance in a certain matter, and are willing to pay you liberally for it."

"Jest you spit it out!" cried Shorty, delighted at the chance to distinguish himself, and proud of the confidence reposed in him.

"You know the girl we came to see the other night?"

"Io?" quickly exclaimed the boy.

"Yes."

"Well, she ain't here, not no more!"

"Yes, I know that. I am in search of her. Do you know where she is?"

"In course I does, you bet!" cried Shorty, in triumph.

"You do?" and the deep, eager tones of the "Marquis" showed how strong was his desire to find the girl that had been stolen from him.

"Bet your stamps on it!" Shorty was partial to slang phrases.

"Where is she?" eagerly inquired Catterton, full of joy at the thought of succeeding so easily in his quest.

"Why, in a red brick house in Grand street, near Broadway," replied the boy, confidently.

The feeling of disappointment that took possession of Catterton's breast at having his hopes dashed thus rudely to the ground is difficult to describe.

"How do you know that she is there?" asked the "Marquis," thinking perhaps that the question might lead to some further information.

"Why, I—" and Shorty suddenly paused. For the first time it occurred to the newsboy that English Bill would not have given him a dollar for nothing; and that his intent toward lola could not possibly be anything but bad.

"Say, you won't be mad at a feller, will ye, if I tell you all 'bout it?" asked the newsboy.

"No, far from it," answered Catterton. "I'll pay you well for any information in regard to the girl."

"All correct! Well, you see, I was a-cryin' the papers up Grand street, 'bout six o'clock—I know 'twas 'bout that time, 'cos I jest come up from the office with last edition—I met Bill in Grand street, an' he gives me a dollar to go over to the house an' find out 'bout his gal, Io', that he said was a-hangin' out there. I found out all I could, an' it wasn't very much, an' I told him, an' he forked over the dollar. That's how I knowed that she was there."

This was decidedly unsatisfactory. The "Marquis" was discouraged.

"Has Io' lit out from the shanty?" asked the boy.

"She has been carried off by Bill," answered Catterton.

"Crickey!" cried Shorty, in amazement.

"Do you think that you could find out where Bill has taken her?" asked the "Marquis."

"Is that what you're goin' to pay me a dollar for?"

"Yes."

"I kin do it!" cried Shorty, emphatically; "if I don't, jest you cave in my head an' call me a foo-foo!"

"If you succeed, the dollar is yours!"

"I'll rake it in now, you bet!" cried the boy; "jest you wait here a little while. I knows all 'bout the old shanty in the rear; I lives in there, I does. Jest you wait here." And the new ally of the "Marquis" disappeared up the alley.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEAD LIFE BECOMES A LIVING ONE.

It was on the evening of the third day after the old secretary had been carried fainting to his room.

By the bedside of the old man sat Doctor Dornton.

The little doctor has taken a great interest in the strange sickness of the old man.

For three days life and death had contended together, and their battle-field had been the body of the secretary.

Dornton had given the case of the patient up as hopeless. As he had said, the chances were ten to one against his recovery. But the one chance prevailed, and "death's pale flag" had retreated from the field.

The patient, for the first time during his illness, had fallen into a deep, refreshing sleep. For five hours the deep slumber had been upon the brain of the sick man. The feverish lips had ceased to mutter. The strange sentences of meaningless words no longer filled the air of the sick room.

The patient slept, and in that sleep there was hope—nay, more, there was life to the sleeper.

The doctor felt the pulse of the old man.

"It is beating as calmly as an infant's. He

is out of danger," murmured the doctor to himself. "This is really the strangest case I have ever seen."

The sick man turned uneasily upon his side. "Ah, he is waking!" exclaimed the doctor. "I wonder if he is in possession of his senses?"

With a sigh the sick man opened his eyes—the eyes that, with their vacant stare, had made such an impression on Mr. Tremaine when he had first looked upon them. But had he beheld them now, he never would have guessed that they were the same eyes. They had lost the vacant look, and were gleaming, full of fire, full of luster, full of intelligence. They were the bright, sparkling orbs of a man of thirty, not the dull eyes of sixty years.

The doctor was astonished at the change in the face of his patient; for opening the eyes had changed the whole appearance of the features.

With a bewildered glance the sick man looked around him.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a tone of wonder.

"Why, don't you remember?" asked the doctor, in astonishment.

"No," said the sick man, slowly, and then he looked inquiringly into the doctor's face, "you are a stranger to me. I do not remember to have seen you before. The room looks familiar, but—and here the strange man closed his eyes wearily, "it seems to me as if I have been in a frightful dream—a dream that has taken up long years of my life."

The doctor wondered at the speech. He fancied that the patient was again wandering in his mind.

"In whose house am I?" demanded the sick man, suddenly.

"In the house of Mr. Tremaine," answered the doctor.

"Tremaine? Tremaine?" murmured the sick man, as if in doubt.

"Yes; is it possible that you do not remember?"

"No, no, I do remember," replied the secretary, "but it seems so terrible that I can not bring myself to think that it is reality."

"What do you mean?" The doctor was puzzled by the strange words.

"I can not tell you," replied the secretary, "but answer me one question: is this house No. 810 Fifth avenue?"

"Yes, of course," said the doctor, amazed at the question. "Why, you must know what the number is."

"I don't know what I know!" exclaimed the sick man, wildly; "so many strange things have flashed across my brain in the last few minutes that I do not know whether I am in possession of my senses or insane. You are Doctor Dornton, are you not?"

"Yes," answered the doctor.

"I begin to believe that I am in possession of my senses then, after all. If so, what a strange situation fate has been pleased to place me in."

"What are you talking about? I can't understand your words any better now than I could yesterday, when you were raging in the fever," said the bewildered doctor.

"Doctor," cried the secretary, suddenly and without paying attention to the doctor's question, "have you known me long?"

The question again made the doctor open his eyes in wonder.

"Why don't you answer?" demanded the patient.

"Well, as to personal knowledge," replied the doctor, "I must say that I know very little of you. I have seen you during the past years when you were in the employ of Doctor Brown—"

"Ah, I have been in his employ, then?" interrupted the secretary.

"Yes, of course! Don't you remember?" asked Dornton, more and more astonished at the strange words of the sick man.

"I have had such frightful dreams that seem like reality, that I can not tell the difference between the two. Do you know any thing about my past life?"

"Eh?" said Dornton, rather bewildered at the question, and somewhat at a loss how to answer it.

"I mean, do you know how I have passed the last years? Tell me all you have ever heard about me," asked the strange man, with powerful entreaty in his tones.

"Certainly," replied Dornton. "Ten years ago you were discharged from the Lunatic Asylum, where you had been for some time under treatment for insanity—"

"Yes, six long years," murmured the secretary, "six years, all one long, dark night."

"What? You remember, then?"

"Yes; but go on."

"Your restoration to reason was effected in a remarkable manner—by means of a heavy fall. Your insanity was supposed to be caused by a fracture of the skull."

"It was—it was," said the stranger; in the same low voice; "I remember it now—I remember the events of that fearful, terrible night."

"Your memory has returned to you, then?" cried the doctor, in wonder.

"Yes, a Boston surgeon once told me that a

second shock, either mental or physical, would cure me completely. That man was wiser than his fellow-doctors. They could not understand his liberal mind, and called him mad, like the rabble who think all men are insane whose ideas are too great for their shallow brains to comprehend. It is the fate of genius to be misunderstood. But go on, sir, with my life. I begin to think that I haven't dreamed at all, but, like Hamlet, there has been 'method in my madness.' If it is so, what a terrible life-path is marked out for me!"

The doctor could hardly believe his ears when he heard these strange words falling from the lips of the quiet old secretary.

"Go on with my history," continued Whitehead.

"You have received some shock, then?" asked the doctor.

"Yes."

"Was it physical or mental?"

"Mental," and an expression of acute pain passed over the features of the sick man.

"There!" cried the doctor, in triumph, "I told Tremaine that you must have received a terrible shock to produce this attack of brain-fever; but he said that it was not so."

"He was wrong; he uttered words that pierced my brain like red-hot irons. But he himself could not have guessed that his words would affect me. Go on with my history."

"You were restored to reason, but your memory was impaired. You could not remember anything appertaining to your past life. You were taken by Doctor Brown into his office. You remained with him ten years; then he retired from practice, and you entered the service of Mr. Tremaine here. That was only a few days ago."

"'Tis as I thought!" exclaimed the secretary; "my dream is all a reality. Then I am in his house—in the house of the man that—" and then the secretary caught the doctor's wondering eyes fixed upon him, and he broke off abruptly in his speech.

"Do not mind my disjointed utterances," he said; "I fear that the fever has not got out of my head yet."

The doctor felt his pulse.

"Why, man, your pulse doesn't show a sign of fever; it is beating as regular as an infant's."

"I shall be well to-morrow, probably."

"Yes, except that you will be a little weak. But, by the way, will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"Yes," said the secretary.

"How old a man are you?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"Only to satisfy myself," replied the doctor. "I never saw a man of your age in the splendid state, physically, that you are in. You have an arm and leg that would do honor to a prize-fighter."

"How old do you suppose I am, doctor?"

"Well, judging by your face, I should say you were between sixty and seventy, and possibly over seventy," the physician replied.

"I am just forty-six years of age," said the secretary.

The doctor stared in astonishment.

"Only forty-six!" he exclaimed.

"That is my exact age."

"Why, I can't understand it!" exclaimed Dornton, thoroughly astonished. "What has made you look so old?"

"You have possibly read, doctor, of men's hair being turned from black to white by a sudden shock—by a terror lasting only a few hours, or perhaps only a few minutes?"

"Yes," replied Dornton, "I have read of such cases."

"Can you wonder, then, that with a fractured skull and six years of madness, my hair is white? To say nothing, mind you, of ten years of life that was but living death. Ten years passed in a waking dream, without even the slightest remembrance of who or what I formerly was."

"No, no, I do not wonder at it!" hastily replied the doctor; "your suffering has indeed been terrible. Then your name is not Whitehead?"

"No, of course not. I was brought to the asylum a crazed stranger. No one knew my name—I could not give it, for reason was a blank. On account of my white head, the keepers, tired of calling me No. 80, gave me my present name. Doctor Brown added James to it, and so I have lived on in the world as James Whitehead."

"And what is your name?" asked Dornton, with natural curiosity.

"I cannot tell it to you in this house!" cried the white-haired man, strangely affected. "Were I to pronounce my name here, the very walls would shrink from me in terror."

The doctor, at this strange speech, was more thoroughly bewildered than he had been at any other time during this strange interview.

"You are speaking in riddles!" he cried.

"Doctor, for sixteen years I have been dead to the world. But now I return to it, and in my heart rages the same wish that filled it on the night when I was struck from life, sixteen years ago."

"And that wish?" asked the amazed doctor.

"Is for vengeance on the man that has wronged me!"

Dornton gazed at the speaker in astonishment, not unmixed with terror.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NOCTURNAL VISITOR.

For a few moments there was silence in the room of the secretary.

The doctor was pondering deeply over the strange speech of the white-haired man. But for the clearness and energy of the speech, the physician would have thought that the man was raving. But there was no room for doubt; the secretary was evidently in full possession of all his faculties.

The case, too, as this strange being had put it, was not unnatural. He passed from life—for, as he had truly said, for sixteen years his existence had been a blank, as far as it was connected with his life before—with a strong wish, a passion swaying his whole nature—so to speak—in his heart. He returned to life with that wish, that passion, the ruling one now, as it had been sixteen years before. The theory was extremely probable, and Doctor Dornton recognized its probability.

"I suppose I shall be infringing upon your secret if I inquire who this man is?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," answered the secretary.

"Well, then, I won't inquire," said Dornton, philosophically.

"I will not breathe my secret to mortal, not even to my foe. For sixteen years he has pursued his way through the world without being called to account for his crime. He has enjoyed all the pleasures of life. He, the guilty one; while I, his victim, driven crazy by his crime—for that was the real cause, my accident but the effect of that cause—have been lingering in the darkness of a disordered brain. But there is justice in this world, after all, and that justice, by an accident, has restored my reason to me; has placed me on the track of this man, whom I will hunt down to his death!"

The doctor, despite his firm nerves, used as he was to scenes of death, and like horrors, shuddered at the fierce tone and glaring eyes of this human bloodhound, who had waked from his sleep of years with one thought, one wish in his heart, and that wish in its fulfillment involved the shedding of human blood.

"How has this man wronged you?" asked the doctor, thinking that the wrong must be bitter indeed that had caused such a terrible thirst for vengeance.

"Robbed me of all that made life dear!" cried the secretary, with fearful emphasis. "Came like a thief when I was absent, and stole my jewel from me. Robbed me of the heart that should have been wholly mine."

The doctor, shrewd, sagacious man of the world, guessed the truth instantly.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself, "there's a woman in the case. I thought so. Women are always at the bottom of all deviltry in this world, and have been so from the days of Adam downward. As Bulwer says, 'Woman should have no sins of her own to answer for: she is the cause of such a list of follies in man, that it would require the tears of all the angels to blot the record out.'"

I suppose it is needless to remark that the doctor was a bachelor.

"I must warn you, my friend, against giving way to these fits of passion in your present weak state, else you will probably have a relapse."

Dornton, able physician as he was, had not guessed that his patient's malady had affected the head alone, and that physically he was as well as ever.

"Do not fear, doctor," the secretary replied; "to-morrow I shall be a well man."

"Well, I hope to see you so," said the doctor, rising to depart.

"Good-by, doctor," said the secretary, holding out his hand; "you have been very kind to me, and, God help me, I have needed kindness."

"Oh, you needn't say good-by," replied Dornton, returning to shake hands with his patient; "say adieu, that's French, you know—means a parting for the present only. You say 'good-by' to a man that you do not expect to see for some time."

"That is why I said good-by to you, doctor," returned the secretary.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Dornton, in wonder. "I shall see you in the morning, for I shall make a point of calling in to see how you are getting on."

"You may call, doctor, but you will not see me," replied the other.

"Why so? you won't deny your medical attendant admission to your chamber?" cried Dornton, with an air of mock dignity.

"Oh, no, doctor; but I shall leave this house early in the morning."

"Why, what on earth are you going to do that for?" cried the physician, in amazement.

"Were I to touch another morsel in this house, now that I know what I do, it would choke me!" said the secretary, excitedly.

The doctor could give but one meaning to this,

and that was that the secretary's real station in life was far above the one he now occupied, and having recovered his reason, he felt ashamed of his menial position. Dornton had already come to the conclusion that his patient was a man of breeding.

"I understand you are ashamed of your present position in this household."

"That may be the reason," replied the secretary, and a peculiar look appeared on his face. It was there but a moment, and the doctor, who was a little near-sighted, did not notice it.

"Well, after you get settled, if you will leave your address at my office, any time, sir, I shall be pleased to call upon you and continue our acquaintance. I assure you, sir, I take a deep interest in you." And with these words the doctor departed.

"A good heart," murmured the secretary; "but what are good hearts to me, when mine is withered and blasted forever?"

For a little while the secretary remained in deep thought.

"I cannot understand it!" at length he cried, talking aloud as if addressing his conversation to some one, although the room contained no one but himself. "If she is the child, how came she here with him?" Another silence, broken only by the ticking of the little clock upon the mantel-piece.

"Blue eyes and golden hair—that is right, except that the mother's hair was straight, while hers curled in crispy ringlets. Still, that is possible. Children do not always resemble the mother. When I first came here, the hair and eyes seemed familiar, though then I had no suspicions whose house I was in, or how deeply I was interested in this girl. But now—now that my memory has come back to me, I cannot trace in her features a single likeness to her mother; and if she is the child, how can she have got into his hands? That is a mystery. Accident, perhaps, might have brought them in contact. He asserted positively to his son that she was the child. He was not playing a game of deception; no, the truth was evident in his voice."

Again there was silence in the room. The brows of the secretary were knitted as if puzzling thoughts were passing through his brain.

"I have it!" he cried at last, after a long period of silent thought. "I might have remembered it before. Let me once see her shoulder and I shall know the truth. But how can I see that shoulder? There is but one way and that is full of danger. That is to enter her room after she is asleep—but if she should wake and discover me! There is but little danger. All suppose that I am very sick, besides I have no motive, that any one could guess, for such an action. How can I enter the room?" A moment the secretary thought.

"I have it!" he cried, in exultation; "the key of the library will fit the lock; I can easily push the inside key out. The slight noise made by it dropping to the floor will not be apt to wake her. One single moment by her side and I can discover the truth. I will make the attempt."

And so having come to this conclusion, the secretary lay upon the bed and watched the hands of the clock as they moved slowly around, marking the flight of time.

The hands of the clock marked twelve before the secretary stirred from the bed. Then he arose and dressed himself.

In stocking feet he moved to the door, opened it and listened. All was still within the house. The inmates long since were buried in slumber.

Closing the door behind him carefully, the secretary stole cautiously and with noiseless feet along the entry.

The apartment occupied by Essie was on the floor beneath the one on which the room of the secretary was situated.

Slowly and without a particle of noise, the secretary descended the stairs. In his hand he carried a small pair of scissors.

The strange, white-haired man proceeded first to the library and took the key from the door; then he crept to the one that led into the apartment occupied by the young girl.

"She is young, and with this grief upon her heart, when she does sleep, she must sleep soundly. Now for the key." Thus mused the secretary. Then, after a moment's listening, to make sure that he would not be disturbed, this prowler of the night inserted one of the blades of the scissors into the keyhole. Luckily for his purpose, the key in the inside, with which Essie had locked the door before retiring, was placed almost square in the keyhole. A slight tap with the point of the scissor-blade and the key was pushed out and fell to the floor inside the room.

Then again the secretary paused and listened intently to discover if the slight noise made by the key striking the floor had awakened the sleeper.

But to the ear placed to the keyhole came no sound to indicate that the young girl had been disturbed by the noise, which indeed was but slight, hardly as much as a mouse would have made running across the floor.

"It has not disturbed her!" the secretary murmured, after a few minutes of patient listening.

Then he gently placed the key he had taken from the library door in the lock. Slowly and carefully he turned it. The well-oiled bolt moved noiselessly back. The door was now unlocked.

The secretary turned the door-knob with the same caution with which he had displaced the key and opened the door.

With stealthy steps the secretary entered the sleeping-chamber of Essie.

The gaslight by the head of the bed, turned down, threw a dim light over the room; but it gave light enough to serve the secretary's purpose. Noiselessly he approached the bed. Essie was sleeping soundly. The coverlid thrown back—for the room was warm—exposed the shoulders of the young girl, covered only with the night-dress.

Essie was lying on her right side, thus exposing to view the left shoulder. Carefully the secretary drew down the night-dress and exposed the white skin of the shoulder that shone like polished marble.

A single glance and the secretary was satisfied.

Carefully replacing the key in the lock he left the room.

"When she wakes in the morning, she will fancy that she forgot to lock the door," he muttered, as he stole up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FAWN BECOMES A TIGRESS.

We will now return to Iola, whom we have lost sight of for some time.

When the coach drove off so suddenly—after she had entered without waiting for Mrs. Higgins or the detective to get in—Iola suspected in an instant that she had been the victim of a plot. The street life that the girl had been forced to lead had made her wise beyond her years. She sprung to her feet to throw herself from the carriage, despite the speed at which it was going, for Iola knew not what fear was in regard to personal danger. But a strong hand seized and forced her back on the seat; at the same time the other hand closed the door.

Iola's heart sunk within her; she felt that she was in peril.

"So I've got you, my beauty!" cried a hoarse voice, that Iola knew only too well.

The voice told her, as she had suspected from the first moment that she had guessed the trap into which she had fallen, that she was in the power of the tyrant from whom she had fled, English Bill.

"You're caged nice now, ain't you?" cried Bill, in triumph, finding that she did not reply.

The old weary look of pain came back over the girl's face, but she did not answer.

"Dressed up mighty fine, ain't yer?" continued the ruffian. "I s'pose you're ashamed of your poor old father now, wot brought you up an' looked arter you." Bill tried to be pathetic, but the attempt was but a sorry failure.

"Wot did you want to try to jump from the coach for? Don't you know you'd break those pretty bones an' spoil that face that 'Dan, the Devil,' is so sweet arter?"

The poor girl shuddered at her protector's name. Now that she was lost to him, she fully realized how dear he was to her.

"Why don't you answer me, you young devil?" cried Bill, savagely. The tone suited him much better than the pathetic one.

"Where did you get this dress and stuff? Did Catterton give 'em to you, say?"

Still the girl made no answer, but sat quiet, held by the ruffian's strong hand, and looked at him with eyes full of angry fire. If eyes had the power to kill, as in the fable, then Iola's orbs would have stricken death to English Bill.

"Why don't you answer me, say?" and the ruffian raised his heavy hand as if to strike her.

"Don't you strike me, Bill!" cried Iola, in a deep, intense voice between her firm-set teeth, while her great eyes flashed lurid fires.

Bill's uplifted hand dropped in amazement. He had never seen the girl, whom he had beaten—and unmercifully, too—ever since she was a baby, display the slightest bit of temper, much less resist his brutality.

"What the blazes do you mean?" cried he, in utter amazement.

"I mean what I say; don't you dare to strike me," replied the girl, her face white with passion.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Bill. He did not exactly understand the meaning of this. "See here, who told you to run away from me, you young whelp, you?"

"I will not tell you!" replied Iola, firmly.

"Well, I guess I know. It's that blasted 'Dan, the Devil,' the 'Marquis.' I'll 'Marquis' him when I get hold on him!" cried Bill, savagely.

"And he'll 'Marquis' you, if ever he meets you, for this!" cried Iola, in defiance. "I held his arm that night on Broadway or you would have suffered."

"What!" almost yelled Bill, maddened by the taunt; "do you dare to threaten me with your lover?"

"He is not my lover!" exclaimed Iola, the

hot blood pouring into her cheeks. "He is a gentleman, while I am only a poor girl."

"Oh, he ain't your lover, then?" sneered Bill. "He dresses you up in these fine clothes all for nothing, I s'pose; he's a charitable cuss; he is; I s'pose he belongs to the animal society."

Bill evidently referred to Mr. Bergh's excellent idea.

"No; again I say he is not my lover. He has never said one word to me in his life that he couldn't have spoken before all the people in New York. He pitied me, like the gentleman that he is."

"Oh, he's a whole wagon-load of Fifth avenue nobs, he is! He's an out-an'-outer! Ain't it a pity that you won't see him, not no more?" said Bill, in a slightly sarcastic manner.

"How do you know that I won't see him?" demanded the girl.

Bill could not understand the spirit that his formerly submissive slave was displaying.

"How do I know?" he repeated, in amazement. "Why, ain't it plain enough? Ain't I got my hands on you, an' do you s'pose I'm fool enough to let you go ag'in, say?"

"And do you think that you can keep me, now that I know what liberty is, and how sweet it is to be free?" she asked, in a tone that plainly showed that Iola, the working girl, was indeed greatly changed from Iola, the street-sweeper.

"Well, I'm goin' to try, my beauty," replied the ruffian. "Things are in a nice fix, I must say, when a feller's own gal runs away from him. Hain't you got any love or respect for your father, say?" and Bill tried to look dignified.

"You my father!" cried Iola, in contempt.

"Yes; who says I ain't?" demanded Bill, quickly and in great alarm. "Has anybody put it into your head to go back on your father?"

Iola could not understand the meaning of Bill's alarm at her simple words.

"Have you ever treated me like a father?" she asked, in indignation. "You have beat and ill-used me ever since I can remember. Is that the way to make me love you or to think of you as a father?"

"Oh!" cried Bill, evidently greatly relieved by the explanation, "that's what you meant, is it?"

"What else should I mean?" asked Iola, in astonishment.

"Oh, nothing; I only thought— Well, it's no matter." Bill was evidently confused by the question.

"You have succeeded in entrapping me into your hands, but you will never keep me living; if you kill me you may. But, so surely as I live, so surely will I escape from you." There is no hesitation in the girl's voice. Iola had, indeed, changed greatly.

"Well, do you know what I'll do, if you run away from me ag'in?" demanded Bill, after a moment's thought.

Iola did not answer.

"I'll just go to the perlice an' have 'em make you come back. You're my gal, an' you ain't of age yet, an' I've got a father's rights, I'll have you to know!" exclaimed Bill, triumphantly.

"Why didn't you go to the police this time, instead of kidnapping me in this way?" asked the girl.

Bill was staggered by the question. To tell the truth, he had very good reasons for not wishing to appear before a police magistrate. The ruffian knew very well that quite a number of unpleasant questions would probably be put to him, the answers to which, if given by him correctly, would be pretty certain to transfer him from the witness-box to the criminal dock to answer some ugly charges; with the State prison at Sing Sing in strong perspective.

"Well, I didn't want to mix you up in any fuss," said Bill, in confusion; "but I'll do it next time, see if I don't!" The ruffian was trying with blustering to frighten the girl. "But, my beauty," he continued, "you won't get out of my hands so easy ag'in, an' if I catch you attempting it, why, I'll beat the life out of you!"

Bill was ferocious!

"No, you will not!" cried Iola, a wicked look on the pale face.

"Why won't I?" asked Bill, mystified by this display of spirit.

"Because, if you lay a single finger on me in the way of violence, I will kill you as sure as there is a God in heaven!"

Bill, ruffian, bully as he was, was awed by the tone of the young girl which was terribly in earnest.

"What do you mean?" Bill growled.

"Exactly what I say. I am a child no longer; I have tasted freedom, and never again will be a slave. You have hunted me down, taken me from the only one in this world who has ever bestowed a kind word or look upon me; you are dragging me back to misery and despair, and I am desperate. I do not care what I do, since I am separated from Daniel Catterton, and you are the one that has torn me from him. Therefore, if you lay a finger on me, kill me outright or I'll make you repent it the longest day of your life." Iola's passion was at a white heat.

As she had said, she was desperate. All the flame in her nature, dormant through long years of suffering, had now suddenly sprung into being.

Bill almost shivered at her manner, more than at her words.

"Curse her!" he muttered to himself, between his teeth; "I believe the little devil would just as lief stick a knife into me as not. Maybe, though, I'll find a way to take the mischief out of her."

"Are you taking me back to that den in Water street?" demanded the girl, suddenly.

"No, I ain't," responded the ruffian. "Do you s'pose I'm a flat? I'm goin' to carry you to a place where that blasted 'Marquis' can't find you if he had all the detectives in New York at his back. A place where you'll be perfectly safe." And Bill indulged in a ferocious grin.

"Don't you be too sure of that," returned Iola, spiritedly. "You can't keep me unless you kill me!"

"Well, then, I'll do it!" exclaimed the ruffian, savagely. "I'd rather kill you than let that infernal 'Dan, the Devil,' have you. If you escape from me, it will only be by goin' into your grave, an' I guess a young, pretty gal like you ain't in a hurry to die yet, are you?"

"I would sooner die than live the wretched life I have been leading over again!" returned Iola.

"Oh, you won't die," said the ruffian; "I'm goin' to make a few thousand dollars out of you afore I get through with you. If I hadn't a chance to make something out of you, I wouldn't care what become of you, 'cept I wouldn't let that 'Marquis' have you, curse him!"

"What do you mean?" asked the girl.

"Ask me no questions, an' I'll tell you no lies," replied the ruffian, with a grin. "I know, an' that's enough."

Iola did not answer; she could not guess a meaning to the mysterious words of English Bill, and finally concluded that it was but the bravado of the ruffian.

The hack still continued on its course. They had already come a considerable distance. Iola guessed—and rightly—that they were going to the upper part of the city. She knew that English Bill was well acquainted with ruffians of every grade. It was probably to the house of some one of these ruffians that she was being conveyed.

The girl, however, did not despair. She had faith that she would escape from the power of the villain who sat before and glowered at her with angry eyes.

She had faith that Heaven would aid her, and in that Heaven she placed her trust.

CHAPTER XXV.

CURLY ROCKS "INTERVIEWS" MR. A. B.

On the morning of the night on which Iola was abducted by English Bill, a mysteriously-worded advertisement appeared in the "Personal" column of the *New York Herald*. The advertisement read as follows:

"WANTED.—Information concerning female infant lost on the night of September 20th, 1852, on Thirtieth str. et near Fifth avenue, at or about the hour of eleven p.m. The infant had a peculiar mark on the left shoulder. Any information will be liberally rewarded, and no questions asked. Apply to A. B., room No. 4, No. 436 Broadway."

As the reader will observe, this was indeed a most mysteriously-worded advertisement.

Simultaneously with the appearance of the advertisement in the *Herald*, a small handbill containing the same notice was distributed freely in all the low saloons where people of bad character—hard cases known to the police—men and women whose portraits adorned the Rogue's Gallery—were known to congregate. So that, by ten A.M., on the day that the notice had been so thoroughly brought to the eyes of a certain class, it was pretty well known to that class that information was wanted, which some one of their number could probably give.

Among others, Curly Rocks read the handbill; then, after pondering over it for a short time, he carried it to a certain person—who at present shall be nameless—and asked his opinion on the matter. A short consultation was held, the end of which was, that Curly Rocks started for No. 436 Broadway, to "interview" Mr. A. B., as he jocosely said.

Curly arrived at No. 436, but he did not immediately enter the building. Curly was too sharp for that. Being given to trickery himself, he suspected it in others. So he walked slowly by and examined the "lay of the land," as a sailor would remark.

Curly saw nothing, however, to excite his suspicions. No. 436 was a small, two-story brick house, with a book-store on the ground floor, a shoemaker's shop in the basement, and offices on the second story above; entrance to which was had by a small stairway by the side of the book-store.

"Well, so far, all is lovely an' serene," said Curly to himself as he sauntered past the house. "The crib is all O.K. I don't see any police a-hangin' round, neither, nor any detectives. It can't be a 'plant'—how can they tell who's

a-goin' to answer the notice? I think I'll risk it. I ain't done nothin' lately; 'sides, 'lection's comin' on soon, an' votes are scarce."

The redoubtable Curly turned and walked slowly back again.

The rough did not feel fully satisfied, and kept a sharp look-out to detect some signs of a trap, if trap there was.

This time Curly paused at the door of No. 436.

"It's all right," he said; "there ain't anybody got their eyes on me!"

But it was not all right, for somebody had got their eyes on him. On the other side of Broadway, in a second story window, concealed from view by a blind, stood a powerfully-built yet active-looking man, about six feet high, with a nose curved like an eagle's beak, and with an eye as sharp as a hawk's. This man, aided by a powerful opera-glass, was surveying Curly Rocks very carefully at the very moment that that worthy was congratulating himself that he was unobserved.

After another cautious look up and down the street, Curly walked through the little entry-way and commenced to ascend the stairs.

"Curly Rocks!" said the stranger with the opera-glass in the window opposite, with a decided air of satisfaction. "That's bite No. 1. He was suspicious, too, of a trap; that was evident from his looks up and down the street. Something's up, then, or he wouldn't be frightened. This opera-glass is a big idea. If I'd been in the street he would have spotted me, sure. This gentleman's got a cool head, but I wonder what on earth he's raking up this old affair for? I s'pose the infant's an heir, or something of that sort. I wonder if Rocks knows anything about it? Well, I'll find out soon."

Then the man with the hawk eye and curved nose turned his attention and his opera-glass to the upper window of the second story of No. 436. The window being open, by the aid of the glass he was able to see the interior of the room and its occupants—at present there was but one—very clearly.

Having a curiosity to know who this man is, who thus with an opera-glass watches his neighbors, we will look at the small tin sign affixed to the door of the room of which he is in possession. The sign reads:

"ALLEN & CRANSTON,
"PRIVATE DETECTIVES."

The private detective is an "institution" in New York. He deals with all business which though criminal in its nature, the parties interested do not wish to have made public.

Thus, if the officers of a bank suspect that one of their employees is robbing the bank—the employee's father, perhaps, an officer of said bank—the private detective is put upon his track. The man's guilt is proved—he refunds what he has left out of the stolen funds, the father makes up the remainder—the officer "resigns," and the "unpleasant" affair is never made public.

Or, a husband suspects his wife. The private detective is called in, proof of criminality is secured—the wife consents to a divorce—"incompatibility of temper"—the affair is "hushed up," and the world is none the wiser.

This is not fiction, but truth, that we have written. There is a vast amount of crime committed in our great cities that is discovered, the criminal caught, but the details never see the light of day in the columns of the daily newspapers. Why? Because the cases are "hushed up" by the "private detectives," and the friends and social standing of the criminal save him from the punishment that he so richly deserves.

But we will return to the rough, Curly.

He, ascending the stairs and reaching the landing, saw that the front room to the left was No. 4.

Curly knocked at the door.

A deep voice bade him "come in," and the rough opened the door.

The room that the rough entered was not a large apartment, and the furniture was extremely scanty, consisting only of a table and two chairs. The windows, which looked out on Broadway, were open and curtainless. It was evident, even to the obtuse mind of Curly, that the occupation of the apartment was but temporary.

Seated at the table, with a note-book and pencil before him, sat a gentleman probably a little over forty years of age. He was evidently a tall, well-built man. His eyes and hair were black. His face smoothly-shaven and quite pale. The heavy lines around the eyes and mouth told of care and suffering. He was dressed entirely in black.

As Curly entered, the man in black cast a glance at him. The rough felt uneasy at the steady gaze of the piercing black eyes.

"Are you Mr. A. B.?" stammered Curly.

"Yes, sir," answered the gentleman. "Take a chair, sir."

Curly sat down and threw a covert glance around the room to make sure that there wasn't any other besides himself and the stranger there. But the rough saw nothing but the four bare walls. No door, save the one by which he had entered. No windows, save the two that looked

out on Broadway. Curly was satisfied that there could be no eavesdropper. A mouse would have found it difficult to discover a hiding-place, much less a man.

The man in black instantly comprehended the meaning of the glance.

"Do not fear, sir," he said, in a deep, powerful voice; "we are entirely alone. No one can overhear us. If you have come in relation to my advertisement for a lost child, our interview will be strictly confidential."

"Oh, I ain't afraid, Cap!" said Curly, with a slight assumption of bluster.

"You have come, then, in relation to my advertisement?"

"Well, yes, I s'pose I have," responded Curly, dubiously.

"What do you know in regard to the matter?" asked Mr. A. B., as he had styled himself.

"Well, now, that's what a lawyer would call a leading question," said Curly, with a grim. Curly was "posted" on legal matters, having had considerable experience in the law courts, as he had figured as the center ornament in sundry trials before Justice Dowling, for assault and battery.

"Of course you put a certain price upon your knowledge?"

"In coorse I do, judge," replied Curly. "I don't tell all I know for nothin', now you bet."

"That is reasonable," said the gentleman.

"Now, in the first place, before I can make you an offer for your information, I must know a little something of the extent of that information."

"That's so, Cap."

"You know that there was an infant lost in Thirtieth street on the night of September 20th, 1852?"

"Yes, I heerd so," said the cautious Curly, who had no idea of committing himself.

"And that infant was a girl," continued the stranger.

"Jes' so! An' that gal was a female," said Curly, with a grin at his own wit.

"Can you produce that girl?" asked the stranger, suddenly.

"Well—" the question—metaphorically speaking—completely upset Curly. For a moment he looked at the gentleman in black with open mouth. Then, recovering a little from the suddenness of the question, for which he had no answer ready, he stammered: "Well—no, I can't."

"Do you know if the child is still living?"

A second question that bothered Curly.

"Well, I can't say that I do."

"It seems to me, then," said the man in black, with a quiet smile, "that you really know very little of this affair, and therefore that your information cannot be very valuable."

"Hold on!" cried Curly, suddenly. "What are you willing to pay for information?"

"A fair price, according to the extent of that information."

"I'm your man, then!" cried Curly.

"But you seem to know nothing about the affair," said the gentleman.

"Oh, don't I, thought?" said Curly, significantly. "I don't tell all I know to one't."

"Then you do know something about this affair?"

"I s'pose you know all about it!"

The stranger nodded assent.

"You see, a friend of mine told me all 'bout it," said Curly, with a wink. The stranger again nodded, as much as to say that he understood the "friend" fiction.

"September 20th, 1852, was a nasty, rainy night."

"Yes."

"A feller was comin' along Thirtieth street, when he got a welt on the head with a slung-shot, which laid him out like a dried herring. Then the two coves—there was two on 'em—went through him—got his valuables, a lot of letters tied together, an' a babby 'bout a year old, with a reg'lar ace of spades marked on the left shoulder."

"Quite correct," said Mr. A. B.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"A MAN THAT KNOWS ANOTHER MAN," ETC.

CURLY leaned back in the chair and looked at the man in black in triumph.

"You have told the occurrence of that night quite correctly, but the principal thing that I wish to discover you appear to be totally ignorant of. And that is, the fate of the child. I wish to know what became of her; if she is living now, and if so, where?"

"I say, Cap!" cried Curly, suddenly, "is the gal an heir?"

"No, sir," answered the stranger, coldly.

"Oh!" and the face of the rough grew blank at the answer.

The shrewd eyes of the stranger saw the disappointment written so plainly on the features of the redoubtable Curly.

"It makes no difference to me whether the girl is alive or dead. I am willing to pay simply to learn the truth, and I would not give one single dollar more to have the child produced now before me than to know that she died years ago," said the stranger, in a cold, quiet tone, without the least sign of emotion.

Curly Rocks was puzzled. He had imagined that he was on the track of a secret that would be worth a small fortune to him, and now, with a few words, this mysterious Mr. A. B. had brought the "Chateau Espagne" to the ground in one grand ruin.

"I don't understand this," muttered the discomfited rough.

"It is not necessary that you should," coolly replied the other. "If you have information to sell in regard to this matter, I am willing to pay for it. If you know nothing of the matter, our interview is ended."

"Well," said Curly, slowly, "I don't know anything 'bout the gal, but I knows a man who knows another man wot does."

"Where is this man to be found who does know about the girl?"

"I can find him for you if you'll pay for it!"

"Why should I pay you, when he will, in all probability, see my advertisement and come himself?" said Mr. A. B., in the same cool, matter-of-fact tone that he had used during the whole interview.

"'Cos he won't come; I'm his agent," said Curly, in quite a dignified manner.

"Ah! now we're beginning to understand one another. Why didn't you say this before?" asked Mr. A. B.

"Well, I kinder wanted to feel my way; that's all," replied the rough.

"And now, having felt your way, suppose you proceed to business."

"All right," said Curly.

"And in the first place, can this man that you speak of give me all the particulars in regard to the child?"

"You bet he can!" replied the rough.

"How did he learn them?" asked the man in black, fixing his eyes searchingly on the face of the rough.

"Why, 'cos the cove I speak of was the one that hit the man in Thirtieth street over the head with the slung-shot and took the babby; and in course he knows all about it, if anybody does."

"Yes, I should think that it was likely," and a quiet smile passed over the face of the man in black. "Where is this gentleman to be found?"

"Well, that depends on who wants to find him, an' wot they want him for. You see, he's quite a jewel of a man, an' sometimes his society is so much hankered arter that he's obligated to retire from public life almost altogether," and Curly could not repress a grin at his description of the character of his friend.

"Of course you know where to find this 'ornament to society?'" said the man in black, in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"Yes, I guess I can hunt him up." Curly spoke quite confidently; and considering that he had just come from a consultation with the man he was referring to, he had reason for his confidence.

"Will you name a place where I can see this man?" asked Mr. A. B.

"Well, I s'pose it will be as well for him to come here as to go anywhere else," replied the rough.

"That is satisfactory to me. When can this person call upon me?"

"Whenever you like, Cap."

"Say to-morrow at this time."

"That's O. K.," replied Curly.

"Very well; I shall expect you then."

"We'll be on hand," said the rough, rising. "you want to know if the gal is living or dead?"

"Yes."

"An' if the gal is living, do you want her?"

"No," replied the man in black, coldly.

"Then it don't make a bit of difference whether she is dead or alive?" asked the astonished Curly.

"Not a bit," replied Mr. A. B.

"Well, this is a queer go!" cried the ruffian, in amazement.

"Not at all. All I wish—as I said before—is to satisfy my mind as to her fate; whether she is alive or dead."

"My pardner will tell you all 'bout it," said Curly.

"To-morrow, then, at this hour."

"Jes' so." And Mr. Curly Rocks took his departure. As he descended the stairs, the thought occurred to him that he had not effected much in "interviewing" Mr. A. B. It was plainly evident that the mysterious gentleman preferred to deal with principals alone and not with agents.

"The old man will 'strike' him, anyway," said Curly, to himself, as he sauntered down Broadway.

After Curly Rocks had departed, the mysterious advertiser who had styled himself Mr. A. B., and who was anxious to ascertain the fate of an infant with the ace of spades on her shoulder, took his handkerchief from his pocket and held it up in the air. This was evidently a signal to the hawk-eyed stranger, with the opera-glass, watching in the window on the opposite side of Broadway. He instantly laid down his glass, took his hat, and locking the door of the office after him—for the hawk-eyed man was the private detective, Richard Crans-

ton, in person—he descended the stairs to the street.

The detective crossed Broadway, and ascending the stairs of No. 436, entered the apartment occupied by Mr. A. B.

"You saw the fellow?" asked Mr. A. B., evidently referring to the rough, who had just departed.

"Yes."

"Did you recognize him?"

"Yes: Curly Rocks, one of the hardest cases that I know of. Did you discover anything from him?"

"No; after a few questions he owned that he came merely as the agent of another party."

"And that party?"

"I am to see to-morrow at the same time this fellow came this morning," replied the man in black.

"Do you think that you can get the information out of him that you desire?"

"I think so," the other replied.

"But did you discover from this Curly Rocks any facts that would lead you to suppose that the other rough that he represents knows the particulars that you wish to learn?" asked the detective.

"Yes," the other replied; "you are aware that I wish to know the fate of an infant, taken from the arms of a man who was attacked and knocked down with a slung-shot on Thirtieth street, about sixteen years ago?"

"Yes," said the detective.

"This Rocks related the particulars of the assault, and also described a peculiar mark that the infant bore upon its left shoulder. This, mind you, without my giving him any clew whatever. So it is evident that he must be well acquainted with the affair."

"Yes, that's true," returned the detective; "but do you think you can come to terms with these fellows?"

"That I do not know," replied Mr. A. B., "but I think I can."

"If they suspect that there is any money in it, they'll be apt to put the screws on, and if the girl is in their hands, you won't get her without paying a big price."

A quiet smile passed over the pale face of Mr. A. B. at the speech of the detective.

"I see, Mr. Cranston," he said, "that you have fallen into the same error that this rough did. You imagine, I suppose, that I wish this girl for some special purpose—that she is, perhaps, the heir to some estate?"

"Well, I haven't given the matter much thought," replied Cranston, a little puzzled at the words of the other. "When you applied to our firm about this business, you merely said that you wished to find a child that was lost in this city sixteen years ago; and that, if it was possible, you would like to come personally in contact with the party or parties that had possession of the child. I at once suggested the advertisement in the *Herald*, and the handbills for the low slums. Besides, for you to receive the persons who should answer the advertisement in this room, which being right across the way from our office, we could easily by means of a glass watch the callers. So if you couldn't come to terms with them, and found that they were really in possession of the information that you desired, why, we could 'spot' 'em and run 'em to earth if they wasn't reasonable. Of course I had a sort of idea that you wouldn't be so anxious about this child, if there wasn't some strong reason in the background. Either that the infant was some relation of your own, or else she was the heir to an estate, to gain which she must be produced. That's just what I thought about the matter."

"You are utterly wrong in your conclusions, Mr. Cranston," said the other. "The child is not related to me in any way whatsoever nor is she the heir to an estate. The child I seek is the child of sin, the offspring of shame; and I frankly own that it would give me greater pleasure to learn that she is dead than to know that she is living."

The voice of this strange, pale man with the piercing black eyes was hard, cold, mechanical, as he uttered this odd speech. The detective looked at him in astonishment.

"Well, I must say that this is about the strangest affair that I have ever met with!" cried the detective, in amazement. "Then you don't really care whether the child is alive or dead?"

"No," coldly answered the other.

"In that case then you'll probably have very little difficulty in getting the truth out of these fellows, if they can make nothing by keeping it back," said Cranston.

"That is my thought exactly."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A HUMAN BLOODHOUND.

For a few moments the detective remained silent. His brows were knitted as if in deep thought and his eyes were fixed upon the floor. He was evidently in that state of mind called a "brown study." Some difficult problem puzzled him.

"I beg pardon," he said, suddenly, raising

his eyes from the floor, and fixing them upon the pale stranger. "Mr.—, Mr.—by the way, I believe I don't know your name." The detective had never thought of this trifling fact before.

"Alfred Brown; A. B., you know, my initials," replied the stranger.

"Well, then, Mr. Brown, I want to ask you a question."

"Certainly, what is it?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I know it's none of my business, but I'm curious—couldn't be a detective, you know, if I wasn't," explained Cranston.

"Go on, by all means."

"Well, now, it's puzzled me—and I don't get puzzled very often," said the detective, with a sort of honest pride. "Well, now, the question is just this: if this girl that you're in search of isn't a relative of yours, or isn't an heir to an estate, what in thunder do you want to know anything about her for? If you don't care whether she is alive or dead, why do you want to know if she is alive or dead?"

For a moment there was silence. The pale-faced man sat with his eyes fixed upon the table, as if doubting whether to answer the question or not.

"You needn't answer, you know, if you don't want to!" cried Cranston. "I know it's none of my business, and I'm probably poking my nose into other people's affairs by putting the question. But the whole affair is a riddle to me, and I want to have it solved if I can."

"Your question is reasonable enough, and I'll answer it as well as I can," replied the other. "This child, that was lost sixteen years ago, is the daughter of my deadly enemy—of the man that has wronged me so bitterly that death could hardly atone for that wrong. As I have said, this child was lost sixteen years ago; yet not ten days back, I return to New York—I have been away since 1852—and I find this man, with a girl whom he calls his daughter, privately. In the world he does not recognize her. This girl is about seventeen, just the age that the infant that was lost would have been, and yet I am sure that she is not the lost infant grown to girlhood. I am sure that she is not his daughter, although he himself thinks that she is. Now, through the aid of these villains, I wish to trace the career of the lost child. Prove her dead; or if living, find out where she is. Brought up, as she must have been—if she has lived—in the midst of shame and crime, it is not difficult to guess what she would probably be now. Then comes the first act of my vengeance. I will go to this man. I will say to him: 'This girl that you have reared is not the child of—well, never mind the name. She is not your daughter. Your child is dead,' or, 'Your child is now an inmate of the low dens in Water street; your crime in part has worked out its own retribution.'

Cold as ice dropped the terrible words from the pale, bloodless lips. Had it been the face of a statue, the features of the stranger could not have been more calm, could not have shown less trace of passion.

The detective looked at the speaker in astonishment.

"Jerusalem!" muttered Cranston between his teeth. "Why, you're coming down on this man just like we detectives come down on a criminal after we've got the proofs to convict him," he said aloud.

"The simile is correct," answered the other, as cold and as passionless as before. "This man is a criminal. I am the detective on his track. But his crime is one that the laws rarely punish. We hang the man who stabs a dagger to another man's heart. But we laugh at that gentleman who steals the love of a married woman—robs the husband of the light and joy of his home—makes his life desolate forever and strikes him to the heart with a shaft sharper far than any ever forged by smith out of steel. The law will not punish my foe as he deserves to be punished, therefore I take the law in my own hands. His child dead, or leading a life of crime, is the first blow that I shall aim at him. The second, I shall think of hereafter."

The detective looked at the man before him—who thus, without trace of passion, told of the dreadful vengeance that he was about to grasp in his hands and hurl at the head of his foe—with a half-shudder. Cranston, in his stormy life, in his adventures with criminals—many of them desperate adventurers—had seen determined men, angry men; men reckless of life and welcoming death, as it were, with open hands; yet he had never seen anything that impressed him so forcibly; that seemed so full of hidden terror, as the cold, passionless manner of the pale man before him. It is the same feeling that forces itself upon the mind as we stand on the ocean-washed rock and gaze out over the white-capped deep—a sense of irresistible power.

The detective drew a long breath.

"This sounds just like a story!" said Cranston.

"The history of every man is a story," replied the other. "Some of them so terrible that if they were to be put in print, the world would throw up their hands and cry, 'Impossible!' as if there could be anything impossible

in nature, except what the Creator has ordained should be so."

"That's truth!" replied the detective.

"You see, I break no law. Like my foe, I sin—for man's vengeance is *always sin*, no matter what the justification—but like him, sin lawfully," said Brown, with a bitter smile.

"Yes, but what grounds have you for thinking that this girl that this man you speak of calls his daughter is not his daughter?" asked Cranston.

"Because his daughter was the child lost in Thirtieth street in 1852. *He at the time knew nothing of that loss.* How then could the child have come into his possession?"

"Accident, perhaps," said Cranston.

"Yes, but it is not likely."

"That's true," replied Cranston, thoughtfully.

"Very true!" said Brown, decidedly.

"You say that this man thinks that it is his child?"

"Yes."

"Well, unless he's got pretty good proof that she is his child, why should he think so?" asked Cranston, with the air of one who had propounded a "knotty" question.

"That is a difficult question to answer," replied the other, slowly and thoughtfully. "I cannot understand it myself. He does think so, beyond a doubt. But he may have been deceived, misled by some artful design."

"But who would have a design of such a nature?"

"Some one wishing to palm on him a child not his own," replied Brown.

"Yes, a reason like that would lead to deception. But, by the way, how long has it been since this man became your enemy?" asked Cranston.

"Nearly eighteen years ago," answered the other.

"Before the birth of this child?"

"Yes, before the birth of the child."

"But why have you waited all this time for vengeance? I should think that a man who hated as bitterly as you seem to would not have the patience to wait all these years for vengeance. Unless you have waited for this child to grow up so as to make it more terrible."

"No," answered the other; "if that had been the case, I should not have lost sight of the girl."

"What then is the reason?"

"I have been asleep," returned Brown, with a strange expression upon his features.

"Asleep!" cried the detective, in wonder.

"Yes, asleep for sixteen years."

The detective winked his eyes as if to ask himself if he was awake.

"I'm either asleep," he thought, "or talking with a madman."

"I don't understand it!" Cranston cried, aloud.

"Neither do I."

"What?" The shrewd, clever detective began to be doubtful whether he wasn't going mad as well as the other.

"I mean," explained Brown, with a sad smile upon his pale, careworn features, "that I can not understand why Heaven should permit a man to sleep for sixteen years and then suddenly wake him back to life again, unless it is fated that I, and I alone, am destined to humble and punish this man, who for sixteen years has gone unpunished."

"Sixteen years!" exclaimed the detective, unable to get over the mystery which he could neither understand nor explain.

"It is a long time," said Brown, with a sigh, called forth apparently by thoughts of his lost life.

"Well, I should say that it was!" cried Cranston; "why, it's almost as bad as Rip Van Winkle, and everybody knows that's all humbug."

"Mine was a sad reality," replied the other.

"Do you really mean to say that you slept for sixteen years?" said the detective, almost unable to credit his own hearing.

"Yes," there was no want of firmness in the answer.

"Well!" the detective was staggered. This was something entirely beyond his comprehension. "I always thought old Rip was a lie, but since you say that you slept sixteen years, I don't know why the old Dutchman, who was used to the business, couldn't have 'seen' you and 'gone four better'?"

"I see you doubt me," said Brown.

"Well, if it was a different kind of a man from you, I'd tell him he lied, right out," said Cranston, honestly. "But you seem to be so serious about the matter, and I don't see what reason you have to 'stuff' me in the premises."

"I haven't any," replied the strange Mr. Brown. "As I am a living man, I slept for sixteen long, weary years—years that passed away in a dream. Rip Van Winkle at the end of his sleep was an aged man, aged both in body and mind. I wake from mine, as young in brain as when the sleep came upon me, and but little older in body. The same thought that filled my head then fills it now. One thought

only, vengeance on the man that has wronged me. This terrible sleep came upon me when I was following on his track; I wake and again take the same road."

"Well, I give in 'dead beat!'" cried Cranston; "I've always flattered myself that I've seen a little of life, but this is away ahead of my time!"

"It is one of those strange things that happen sometimes in the world," replied the other.

"Why, Mr. Brown, I never came across anything like it in my life."

"A different path for different men."

"Yes, that's truth," said Cranston; "but speaking of this man and of the false daughter, that he thinks is the true one; I can't understand how he can think so, if she isn't the right one." The idea bothered the detective.

"That I do not know, but I am sure he does think so. I will tell you why. The girl has been reared away from New York. A month or so since, the father brought her home, not revealing, however, to any one that she was his child. This man's own son, a youth of twenty, fell in love with the girl, and asked his father for permission to marry her. Judge then of that father's anguish when he was compelled to tell the boy that he had fallen in love with his half-sister."

"The father must believe the girl is his, then!" cried the detective.

"Yes, that is evident, and I cannot understand the reasons for that belief," replied Brown, evidently in doubt.

"May he not have seen these Russians after the child was lost—at the time you speak of, sixteen years ago—and got the child from them?" The detective was shrewdly putting the probabilities.

"No, that is impossible. As I have told you, he could not have known that the child was lost in Thirtieth street. That is an impossibility. Such knowledge could not have come to him in any way. It is quite beyond the bounds of accident."

"Then I can't account for it." Cranston was bewildered.

"Besides, if this is the true daughter that this man has, why are these fellows so anxious—as anxious they are—to know if the child is an heir to an estate? What could it matter to them if she is out of their hands, whether she is an heir or not? Do you see the point?"

It was so plain that the detective did see it easily.

"That's true," said Cranston; "if the girl was dead, too, they wouldn't be interested."

"I see you have followed my argument closely. From the language that this fellow used to-day, I am confident that the girl is living, and in the hands of the man or men of whom this Curly Rocks is the representative. Perhaps she is the wife of one of these roughs, or perhaps, worse still."

"By George!" cried the detective, suddenly; "why, you've got a sure clew to the child's identity. Don't your advertisement say a peculiar mark on the left shoulder?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, it's plain enough. See the left shoulder of this daughter, and that settles the question."

"You forget," said Brown, coldly: "the mark was on the shoulder of an infant, hardly a year old. It would not be apt to be there now. Twas but a slight blemish. It must be a terrible scar to remain visible from infancy to girlhood."

"Yes, but the father would have known the child, when a child, by the mark."

"The father did not know that the child was marked," returned Brown.

"More mystery," said Cranston, whose usually clear head was already bewildered by the strange things he had heard.

"Yes, but time will solve it," said Brown, sternly.

"I might as well resume my post; you may have more visitors," observed Cranston.

The detective beat a retreat down-stairs.

"If he is a madman, he's the most practical one that I ever saw!" exclaimed Cranston, as he descended.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SHORTY MAKES A BARGAIN.

We will now return to the "Marquis" and Jim, whom we left in Water street. Standing near the door of the dance-house, they waited for the return of Shorty, the newsboy, who had gone on an exploring expedition to the house in the rear, to discover, if possible, signs of the lost girl.

In about a quarter of an hour after Shorty's departure, he returned, greatly to the relief of the "Marquis," whose feelings at the loss of Iola can better be imagined than described.

"Well, did you find her?" Catterton eagerly asked.

"No, sir-ee," replied the newsboy; "she ain't in the crib in the rear, 'cos I've been 'bout all through it. You see I went into every room an' axed 'em if they wanted to buy some

matches, an' I just talked to Irish Molly—that's English Bill's cook—like a Dutch uncle. Well, I did, now; an' Bill ain't been home since this mornin'."

"What shall we do?" said Catterton, almost in despair.

"Did she go off in a hack?" asked the newsboy, eagerly, as a sudden idea came to him.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the "Marquis," quickly, catching a ray of hope from the newsboy's manner.

"I'll just bet all my loose stamps that I know where she is!" sung out Shorty, in a defiant manner, as much as to defy contradiction.

"Indeed?—where?"

"Will you 'see' me, if I tell yer?" asked Shorty, with an eye to business. By "seeing" him, he insinuated that he would like to be rewarded for the services that were to be rendered.

"Yes, yes, I'll give you a five-dollar note if you succeed in finding her!" cried Catterton.

"How much?" yelled Shorty, in astonishment.

"Five dollars!"

"Say it ag'in," demanded our hero, his eyes as big as saucers.

"Five dollars!" repeated Catterton.

"Say, you ain't crazy, are you?" cried Shorty, beginning to have doubts about earning five dollars so easily.

"No, no, of course not!" cried the "Marquis," impatiently. "If you can put me on the track of Iola, so that I can find her, you shall have the money."

Then another doubt entered the mind of the newsboy. He approached Catterton, and lowered his voice as he spoke.

"Say, sport, you ain't the cashier of a National Bank, are you?"

"No, no!"

"Hain't been makin' a raise out of government bonds, eh?" Shorty had read the papers he sold, and understood the prevalent way of becoming suddenly rich in New York.

"No."

"Are you a politician—one of the ring?"

"No."

"Say, do you live in New York?"

"Yes; why do you ask?" said Catterton, in wonder.

"Are you in the revenue service?"

"No!"

Shorty was astonished.

"He lives in New York—he ain't a cashier of a bank, nor a politician, nor a bond-robbler, nor a revenue cuss—an' he's got five dollars to give 'way for nothin'!" muttered the newsboy, in astonishment.

"Well, will you give me the information?" asked Catterton, impatiently.

"An' you'll fork over five dollars if you find the gal?"

"Yes."

"Bully for you!" cried shorty, in glee; "why, you're a red-hotter rooster than I am! Five dollars! why, I'll just go and board at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Where do you think Bill has taken the girl?" questioned Catterton.

"Do you know Patsy Duke?"

"No."

"Why, he drives a hack, an' keeps a rat-pit up in Forty-fifth street, right near Turtle Bay. Don't you know where it is?" asked Shorty, in astonishment.

The "Marquis," though pretty well acquainted with all the "spots" in the great metropolis, was obliged to confess his ignorance of Patsy Duke's place of amusement.

"He calls it the 'Dew Drop.' I know I 'dropped' a quarter there one night a-bettin' on a 'chicken dispute.' I tell you, sport, roosters ain't the things for to put your 'stamps' on now," said the boy, with a melancholy air.

The streets of a great city is not the place to rear boys and make good, honest men of them. The air is filled with vice, and contagion is borne on the breeze: the young are imitators; is it a wonder that they ape the evil habits of their elders?

"You think, then, that Bill will be likely to carry the girl there?" asked Catterton.

"That's the size of it!" answered Shorty, by which expression he meant to say that he did think so. The "Street Arab" of New York is as much given to the use of slang as are his brothers in Paris and London; and we doubt if, for wit and sharpness, either can much excel their young relative.

"You see," continued the boy, "Patsy's got a large tumble-down sort of an old wooden barracks up there. The rat-pit's down in the cellar, so that the perfice can't spoil the fun; and then there's a whisky-mill (liquor store) on the ground-floor, an' the rest is roonis wot he lets out. But he don't let out many, 'cos it ain't fit for a first-class croton-water bug for to stay in; he'd jest waltz off on his left ear, lively."

"Will you be able to find out if Iola is there or not?" asked the "Marquis."

"In course I will," answered the boy, confidently. "I'll jest go right up an' bunk in there to-night. You see, I used to go up there and bunk when the old man was home, 'cos

when he got his benzine in he used to make it hot for me here. You see, my dad is a 'sailor boy, so gallant and bold.' He ain't home now; the climate don't agree with him here in the winter, an' he allus goes up the river to Sing Sing for his health, reg'lar," and Shorty winked significantly.

"How long will it take you to find out?"
"See you to-morrow mornin', sport," answered Shorty.

"Very well; come to this number on Broadway," and the "Marquis" gave the newsboy his address on a card. "Come as early as you can."

"I'll be on hand now, you kin jest bet!" cried Shorty, pocketing the card. "You see, sport, they won't think I know any thing 'bout the gal, an' I kin find out easy 'nough if Bill's been there from some of the rounders. I'll jest keep my eyes open, now."

"Remember, five dollars if you succeed!" said the "Marquis."

"Jest you take a photograph of that five dollars, 'cos I'll go for it to-morrow mornin', sure." And with this speech the newsboy departed on his mission, while Catterton and Jim slowly retraced their steps to Broadway.

"I can do nothing but wait," said the "Marquis," in a fever of impatience. "If I could only call in the strong arm of the law, how quick I'd tear the girl from him!"

"Well, it's an ugly case," said Jim, thoughtfully. "For his boy finds that the girl is in this 'ouse, where 'e thinks she his, it's going to worry us for to get'er hout."

"I'll think of some plan to save her if I can only discover where she is. I have the strangest feeling in my breast for this girl. I don't know why I should be so anxious about her. I couldn't feel worse about the affair if she were my own sister."

"Why, it's as plain as can be, you know," said Jim; "you're in love with the girl."

"By Jove!" the thought for the first time occurring to him; "perhaps I am."

"Perhaps!" exclaimed Jim; "why, hin course you are. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"I've always regarded her as a child."

"A child! The girls that are brought up in the streets of New York are women at fifteen. It's an 'ot'-ouse life, an' like the 'ot'-ouse flowers, they dies early."

"I'll rescue her first, and then I'll find out the true state of my feelings, afterward."

"That's very sensible," replied Jim.

As the "Marquis" had truly said, he had nothing to do but wait; but, oh! how hard it is to wait sometimes!

We will now return to Iola and English Bill, who, seated in the hack, were being borne rapidly up-town.

At last the hack stopped.

Iola could see that all without was dark. The hack had evidently halted in some unfrequented street, far from the busy whirl of city life.

Then to her quick ear came the sound of waves dashing against a pier. It was evident, then, that she was by the river, but whether it was the East or North river, she could not even guess.

Bill opened the carriage-window on the left, and put his head out, at the same time keeping a firm grip upon Iola's arm..

The driver of the hack had dismounted, and coming to the side of the carriage, held quite a consultation with Bill.

Iola, though listening intently, could not overhear a word of the conversation, which the two men carried on in whispers.

The conversation ended, Bill shut the window, and the hack-driver left the side of the carriage. The driver did not resume his seat upon the box, but went up the street.

Iola, after they had remained some ten minutes without proceeding onward, began to wonder at the meaning of the delay.

"You're pretty near home," said Bill, surveying Iola with a grin of triumph.

"Home!" exclaimed Iola.

"Yes, your home for the present, an' one which I think will bother your lover to find out," replied Bill.

At that moment the hack-driver returned, and his arrival put a stop to the conversation.

"It's all right," said the driver, opening the door of the carriage.

"Come, get out," said Bill, addressing Iola.

Without a word, the girl obeyed. Resistance at present she knew would be useless.

"Come on, Bill," said the hack-driver, leading the way.

"Now, don't you try to kick up any fuss, 'cos it won't do you a bit of good," remarked Bill, drawing the arm of the girl within his own. "An' don't you try to run, 'cos I've got hold on you tight. Just you come peaceably, an' it will be the best for you in the end."

Iola did not reply; her heart was too full for words. She fully realized the danger of her position. Every step she took was taking her further and further away from the only one in all the wide world that she cared for. The future was all dark; no ray of hope gleamed through the clouds of despair that surrounded her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PRISON OF THE STREET-SWEEPER.

AFTER walking two blocks, the hack-driver, who led the way, turned to the left and took a street leading from the river, parallel with which the three had been walking. Bill and Iola followed. A few hundred feet up the street, and the guide stopped before a two-story wooden house, that looked like a relic of bygone years, and was terribly out of repair. The lower floor of the house was occupied by a liquor store; one of those licensed dens of infamy where poison is retailed by the glass; where the poor—who really suffer for bread sometimes—spend their scanty earnings for the liquid fire that destroys alike both body and soul.

No light shone from the windows above the liquor store; all was dark and dismal. The house was apparently tenantless.

The hack-driver opened a small door by the side of the liquor store; the door was evidently the entrance to the rest of the house.

"Wait here, Bill," said the driver, closing the door behind the rough and the girl, after they had entered. "Wait till I get a light. I won't be a minute," and then the driver walked off through the darkness of the entry as if the way was perfectly familiar to him, which indeed it was.

The fall of the man's steps rung out with a hollow sound as he strode along the passage-way.

In the darkness and in silence the two waited for the return of the driver. English Bill was revolving in his mind a certain plan of vengeance, and in that plan Catterton, the "Marquis," was to figure, and his position was to be a very prominent one indeed.

And Iola? What were her thoughts? The poor girl could hardly have told, so many things were passing rapidly across her brain. In the few minutes that she stood there in the dark, her whole life, from her childhood upward, passed quickly in review before her; and what a life of misery hers had been! It was relieved by one ray of light only, and that ray was shed upon her path when Dick Catterton came upon it. How bitter, then, were her thoughts when she reflected that perhaps she would never see him again!

A light glimmered along the dark, narrow entry. It came from a lighted candle, borne in the hands of the hack-driver.

By the light of the candle the girl could see that at the end of the entry was a stairway, on the step of which the hack-driver was standing.

"Come on, Bill!" said the man.

Bill obeyed the injunction and advanced, still keeping his grip upon Iola's arm.

Up the worn and creaky stairs—broken here and there by the tread of heavy feet—went the three.

The driver turned to the right at the head of the stairs; went a few paces along the entry-way, and halted before a door. He inserted a key, that creaked dismally as he turned it in the lock, and opened the door.

The two following behind entered the room after the driver.

The room was quite a large one. It contained a bed, a small cooking-stove, a table and a couple of chairs.

There were two windows in the room, but they had heavy shutters on the outside that barred observation. The light was admitted into the room by two heart-shaped holes in the upper part of the shutters.

"How will this answer, Bill?" asked the hack-driver, setting the candle down upon the table.

"Bully!" answered Bill, emphatically, after a glance around the room.

"You won't be disturbed at all, gal," said the driver, with a grin upon his hard, brutal features. "You're 'bout the only tenant that I've got now."

"Where does that door lead to?" asked Bill, whose eyes had noticed a door in the wall to his right.

"It's only a closet," answered the driver, throwing it open and exposing to view a small closet. "There ain't any way of getting into the room or out of it, 'cept by this door," and the man pointed to the one by which they had entered. "The shutters are fixed tight, an' I guess that there won't be much danger of anybody getting in to harm the gal."

Iola understood that the fellow meant that there wasn't any danger of her getting out.

"You see, Bill, there's the best bull-terrier in the country loose in the back yard all the time, an' he's just death on strangers, he is."

Iola saw how fully she was in the power of these dreadful men, yet even with the full knowledge of her danger, she did not despair.

"All right, Patsy; it's jest bully! You jest wait for me down-stairs; I'll be down in a minute," said Bill.

Patsy understood the hint, and took his departure.

"Now, gal, what chance do you think you'll have of gettin' out of my hands, eh?" asked Bill, in triumph.

"Do you think that you can keep me?" asked Iola, a strange light shining in her full blue eyes.

"Well, I'm goin' to try; that is, to keep you as long as I want to," replied the ruffian.

"And how long will that be?"

"That depends upon circumstances. Any way, till this lover of yours, this 'Marquis,' is put out of the way."

"Out of the way?" asked Iola, not understanding the fearful meaning of the simple expression.

"Yes, until he's dead!" cried Bill, brutally; "do you understand that better?"

"And are you going to put him out of the way?" asked the girl, not in the slightest degree alarmed by the threat, for she had perfect confidence that her protector was fully a match for English Bill and all his gang.

"Well, I am, now, jest!" cried Bill, boastfully. "I'm goin' to settle him. He won't come after you, not no more."

"I hope that you will make this attempt soon!" said Iola, quietly.

"The blazes you do!" exclaimed Bill, in astonishment. "Why do you hope that?"

"Because if you try to kill him he will probably kill you, and then I shall be free," replied Iola.

"The devil ho will!" cried Bill, rather confounded by the conclusion that the girl had arrived at. "We'll see about that."

"Yes, we shall see," repeated the girl, who had perfect faith in the "Marquis's" prowess.

"I sha'n't give him a chance to escape this time!" cried Bill. "I'll fix him, an' as for you, my beauty, you'll stay here until he is fixed. Then if you don't do as I want you to, I pity yer, that's all," and with this covert threat, Bill left the room, locking the door behind him as he did so.

Iola was alone, no company save her own thoughts. A bitter, hard life had hers been from the cradle upward. Reared amid crime and want, the streets her school, misery her teacher, yet so far she had escaped contamination; and she lived in the hope that the future might be brighter far than the past.

Even now a prisoner, she knew not where, she did not despair; "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and Iola, friendless and alone, hoped.

We will now return to the Tremaine household in Fifth avenue.

The blow that had fallen upon the two young hearts, Oswald and Essie, was indeed hard to bear; while Loyal Tremaine himself was not less miserable than was his son and daughter.

Another strange thing too had happened to astonish Tremaine. The old secretary, James Whitehead, had suddenly disappeared—left the house without the knowledge of any one, and without even bidding his employer good-by.

Tremaine could not understand it. The old man had not risen from his bed the day before—was apparently very sick, and yet the following morning he was gone.

Doctor Dornton, who had stepped in, told Tremaine of the conversation that he had had with the old man the previous evening. This somewhat explained his mysterious departure, and as the doctor gave it as his opinion that the secretary was not in his right mind, of course his strange action was not to be wondered at. Besides, Tremaine had so much in his own family to trouble him, that the old man and his sudden departure was soon banished from his mind.

Going into the parlor, Tremaine found Oswald sitting by the window with a gloomy brow, looking listlessly out upon the avenue.

Oswald looked up as his father entered.

"I am glad you have come, father. I want to speak with you," said the young man.

"What is it, Oswald?" asked Tremaine, pained beyond expression, as he saw how pale and careworn his son looked.

"I wanted to ask your permission to go to Europe, father," said Oswald.

"To Europe!" cried Tremaine, in astonishment.

"Yes, father," answered the son. "I cannot bear to stay here, to remain under the same roof with the girl that I love better than I do my own life, but whom I know it is sinful to love. Father, I can never look upon Essie as a sister, or at least, not at present. Years must come and go before I can forget this fatal love. Every time that I look in Essie's face, I feel that I love her more and more, but not as a brother should love a sister. It is a different passion from that that fills my heart. I cannot conquer this love, it is stronger than I; it conquers me. And therefore, father, I thought that the best thing that I could do, would be to go abroad. Removed from her sight, I may forget her, or if not her, at least forget the love that she has inspired. I have been thinking this over all the morning, and I think that a trip to Europe will be the best thing for me."

Tremaine did not answer for a moment; the idea came so suddenly upon him that it startled him; Loyal Tremaine loved his son, and he could not bear the thought of parting with him, even for a brief time.

"And you think then that this is the only thing that can cure you?" asked Tremaine, at length.

"Yes, father, I have thought the matter over

carefully and seriously. Absence may cure me. If I stay here—see this girl's face daily—love her as I do, in spite of reason, yet know that she never can be mine, though she, I and all the world were willing, it will end in my going mad!" Oswald spoke with terrible earnestness. Tremaine could not gainsay the truth of his words.

"I fear, Oswald, you are right," the father said, with a deep sigh, "and yet it is hard to think of parting with you."

"You are willing to let me go then, father?" Oswald asked.

"I leave it to your own judgment," Tremaine replied. "If you cannot conquer this passion, it is better that you should go, better for you and perhaps better for Essie too."

"Poor girl," murmured Oswald; "I can judge what her feelings are by my own."

"Yes, the blow has been a terrible one for all," said Tremaine, "but I cannot but remember that it was my own hand that formed the bolt."

"No, father," replied Oswald, "your sin was but a venial one, and did not deserve such a terrible retribution."

And this is the verdict of the world, "a venial sin," to steal the honor of a woman and blast a man's life. And yet there can be no judgment either in this world or hereafter more terrible than the tortures of the mind of the man who commits such a crime, and then in after life realizes fully what he has done. And these tortures Loyal Tremaine felt.

"We will not speak of that, Oswald," said Tremaine. "I have been punished terribly, and I bow my head in submission to that punishment. If you are determined to go, go then. Remain abroad until you are cured, and then return home."

And so it was settled that on the following Saturday Oswald Tremaine should sail for Europe.

CHAPTER XXX.

CURLY ROCKS IS ASTONISHED.

The strange man, with the black hair and eyes, who had called himself Brown, sat in his room on Broadway waiting for the person to call upon him, whom the rough, Curly Rocks, had made the appointment for.

Dick Cranston, the private detective, sat in his room opposite with his opera-glass leveled at the open window.

"He should be here soon!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, musingly, as he examined his watch. "It is already past the time. Oh!" and the pale-faced man gave vent to a long-drawn sigh, "how tired I am of this waiting! Will the time never come to strike this man? Must I remain forever hid behind a screen of lies? Shall I never be able to face this man, tell him who I am, and see him tremble beneath my look?"

The man in black arose after uttering this strange speech, and for a few moments paced the room rapidly. The coldness of the man was all gone now, nothing left but fire.

"I've waited a long time," he muttered, between his teeth, as he paced up and down, "but it seems to me that I hate now as fiercely as I did when I first learned of the wrong he had done me. His child, too, in the hands of these russians, as doubtless she is; that is another triumph for me. Oh! the vengeance, when it does come, will pay for the waiting!" And this man who talked and acted so strangely, laughed bitterly to himself—a cynical laugh, having little of mirth in it.

"What the deuce is he about?" muttered Cranston, who was watching the stranger's movements by the aid of an opera-glass. "He's striding up and down the room like a madman. I can't understand him!" Cranston was honest in his confession; his strange client was indeed a puzzle to him. "That story that he told me the other day was about the strangest one that I ever heard. If he has lost his senses, though, I'm blessed if he isn't smarter than half the men that have theirs."

The worthy detective was musing over this mystery, when his eye caught sight of a man on the other side of the street who was about to enter the door of No. 436.

"Curly Rocks!" cried the detective, with a low whistle, expressive of great astonishment, "and alone, too! Now what the deuce does that mean? Is it possible that he knows all about this affair and hasn't got any one at the back of it? Or is it all a 'plant' to raise a little money out of this Mr. A. B.? 'Alfred Brown!'" and the detective chuckled to himself. "Now, that's altogether too 'thin,' I can't swallow that. His name is Brown about as much as mine is. Curly is suspicious." Cranston's notice was attracted by the movements of the rough, who was pausing in the doorway. "Now is he afraid of being watched, or is he waiting for some one?"

Curly had paused as he had done the day before, and was looking carefully around him. At last the rough being satisfied that he was unwatched—never dreaming of the detective with the opera-glass in the second-story window opposite—commenced to ascend the stairs.

Mr. Brown had resumed his seat at the table when the rough knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Brown, and somewhat to his surprise when the knocker entered, he found that it was his visitor of the preceding day.

"Good-mornin'," said Curly, coolly helping himself to a chair.

"Good-morning, sir," replied Brown; "are you alone?"

Curly noticed that the gentleman into whose presence he had come cast an inquiring glance at the door as if he expected to see another enter.

"Oh, you needn't look! I'm all alone!" said the rough.

"Ah, indeed?" observed Mr. Brown, with a slight degree of astonishment expressed upon his features. "I thought you told me that the person who knew the history of the child, whose fate I am anxious to learn, would call upon me this morning.

"Yes, I told you so," replied Curly.

"Is he not coming?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, he don't exactly like the way you wants to do business," replied Curly, coolly.

"Indeed?" There was a peculiar expression in the voice of Mr. Brown that Curly did not like.

"No, he don't!" he cried, roughly. "You ain't actin' fair an' square an' bove board. My friend thinks as how the child is an heir to somethin', an' he wants to know all the particulars 'fore he goes ahead or shows his hand."

"That is, your friend wants me to show my hand—to use your own simile—or else he will not join in this game. That's it, isn't it?" and the stranger bent his piercing black eyes full on the face of the rough, an operation that Curly did not enjoy, for there was a peculiar something in the eyes that he did not like.

"Blessed if his eyes wasn't like the eyes of a feller wot was insane!" so Curly expressed his mind afterward when telling of the interview.

"Well, since you put it that way, p'raps that is the idea," Curly replied, slowly.

"Ah, well, I don't intend to play any such game," coolly replied Mr. Brown, still keeping his glittering eyes fixed full on the face of the rough, much to that worthy's annoyance.

"You don't?"

"No. What my motive is in this affair is none of your business, nor of this man who keeps himself in the background. When I tell you that I do not care whether the girl is alive or dead, I should think that you would be convinced that there isn't any money in the affair."

"Yes, I know you tells me so; but how can I tell but arter you gets out of us wot we knows 'bout the gal, but that you'll try to get hold on her?" asked Curly, shrewdly.

"You will hold the girl in your hands—she is no relative of mine—the law gives me no power over her, and you can make your own terms if she proves to be valuable."

"Well, that's fair," said Curly.

"What could be more reasonable?"

"Say, how much are you a-goin' to come down for this?" Curly had an eye for business.

"How much do you want?"

"All I kin git," was the truthful answer.

"When can I have the information?"

"Just as soon as you like," answered Curly.

"Can you give it to me?" said Brown, beginning to think that Curly's "pardner" was a fiction, and that the rough himself was the entire firm.

"No, I can't, but if you'll go with me, I'll fetch you to the cove wot can."

"How far is it?" asked Brown.

"Only up to Fortieth street."

"Are you prepared to take me at once to this person?"

"In course," answered Curly.

"I suppose that there isn't any objection to my taking a friend with me?" asked Brown.

"Well, I s'pose not."

"That is all right, then." Brown took a handkerchief from his pocket and carelessly wiped his forehead with it. This was the signal agreed on between Brown and the detective. The latter instantly left his post of observation and came across the street.

"He will be here in a moment," Brown said, after giving the signal.

Curly was astonished.

"How the devil does he know when his friend is coming?" the astonished rough asked himself; "he didn't call anybody."

"You are in no hurry, Mr. Rocks?" asked Brown.

The rough started.

"Eh! do you know my name?" he said, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes," replied the other, "Curly Rocks; is it not?"

"Yes," muttered Curly, bothered at Brown's knowledge. "Why I never see'd you afore yesterday!" cried Curly, unable to guess how this stranger could have learned his name.

"Nor I you," answered Brown.

"How did you know my name, then?"

"Possibly I guessed it."

"Say, you ain't a detective, are you?" asked Curly, in some alarm.

"No."

Just then the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Cranston, the detective.

Curly cast a rapid glance at Cranston, but the detective was unknown to him, although he was well known to the detective.

"This is the gentleman who will go with us," said Brown, indicating Cranston.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Rocks," said the detective, pleasantly.

The face of the rough plainly showed his amazement.

"Blessed if he don't know me, too!" muttered Curly, somewhat alarmed. "I think we've showed our hand instead of making these chaps show theirs."

"Now, sir, we are ready," said Mr. Brown.

"In course," said Curly, who had not yet recovered from his astonishment. "I say, what might your name be?"

"Well, it might be Kennedy"—Curly started at the name of the Superintendent of Police—"but it isn't. My name is Smith," said Cranston.

"Smith!" muttered the rough to himself. "I'm afraid that is a 'plant,' an' I'm in for it. Well, I ain't done nothin'."

"You probably don't remember me," said the detective.

"No, I can't say as I do," replied Curly. "I don't think I ever had the honor of being introduced to you."

"Ah, perhaps not," said Cranston. "I remember you, though. I was in the court-room when you were brought up to answer that charge of assault with intent to kill, in the saloon in Chatham street."

Curly began to look alarmed.

"Don't you remember? Alderman Mike Mulligan went your bail. It must have cost you considerable to have bought that countryman off so he wouldn't appear as a witness against you. By the way, I see that Mulligan is going to run again next election. I suppose you're good for ten or twenty votes for the man that saved you from going to State Prison?" said the detective, coolly.

Curly was almost struck dumb as this mysterious Mr. Smith "ventilated" this episode in his life. Curly began to have a strong impression that, to use the old saying, "he had put his foot in it" in taking any part in the affair that he was now engaged in.

"How the blazes do you know about me?" asked Curly, in a sulky manner.

"My dear Mr. Curly Rocks, there are very few of your achievements that I don't know something about," replied the detective, laughing.

"You see, sir, that we are pretty well posted in regard to you, and I can assure you that if you are obstinate or unreasonable in this business that we are now engaged in, we shall probably find out all that we wish to know without the assistance of either yourself or your partner, who seems so desirous to keep himself in the background," said Brown.

"I'm in for it!" muttered Curly to himself. "Well, gents, I don't want to take no advantage of nobody," he said aloud, and with quite a change of tone from his former bullying one. "I'm only actin' for another cove."

Then the rough led the way to the street, followed by the others.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MAN THAT SAT ON THE PIER.

The "Marquis" and Jim sat in the room of the former on Broadway, the morning succeeding the night when they had made the appointment with Shorty, the newsboy.

"Strange he doesn't come," cried Catterton, impatiently.

"Patience is a virtue, and 'Marquis,' we ought to be all virtuous, you know," said Jim, sagely.

"Ah, that's all very well for you to say," replied the "Marquis." "It is natural that you shouldn't be as interested in the matter as I am."

"That's true, you know; I ain't in love with the girl."

"Well, I don't know that I am," said Catterton, doubtfully. "I think a great deal of her, it's true, but the feeling may not be love. I rescued the poor girl from the power of a brutal tyrant—it's about the only good act of my life, and, of course, I can't help liking the object that prompted that good act."

"The honly good act!" cried Jim. "Oh, no! there's another one just as good, though I don't know as the hobject that prompted it—as you call it—his."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Catterton.

"'Ow did you make my acquaintance?"

"Why, I saw a crowd on Broadway; naturally, I ran to see what was the matter—"

"Hand you found a little feller—that was me—a-struggling with two big chaps. You took my part hand got me away. I told you I adn't

any money, hand you tooked me 'ome hand 'elped me."

"Yes, I believe I did."

"Well, do you know what I was before you 'elped me?" asked Jim.

"No; I never asked you any questions."

"Hand, in consequence, hi never told you hany lies. Vell, I was a Hinglish pickpocket. I was brought up among thieves. I never know'd what hit was to receive kindness. I 'ad just landed when you picked me out of that scrape. You made an 'onest man out of me, hand while hi lives hi will never forget hit."

The expression upon the face of the Englishman, as he finished his simple story, proved that he spoke the truth.

Dan Catterton, the "Marquis," the tool of the card-sharpers, the decoy duck of the "black-legs"—who, by the way, half the time are but half as black as they are painted—had saved two souls from sin; how many of the "unco" righteous can say the same?

The "Marquis" surveyed Jim in astonishment.

"Hit's hall true!" said the Englishman.

A knock at the door interrupted the conversation.

The door opened, and Shorty, the newsboy, entered.

"Well, have you discovered Iola?" asked Catterton, anxiously.

"Not a bit on it," answered the boy, sorrowfully.

"No?"

"Nary time!" said Shorty. "I went up to the old shanty last night. Bill had been there, but he come to see arter buying a dorg an' he didn't bring the gal with him, an' the house upstairs is all shut up. I went out into the back-yard for to see if I could see any lights in any of the winders, an' Patsy's big bull-dorg, wot he keeps in the back-yard, he made a jump at me, an' bout tore the whole seat of my trowsers out!" and Shorty's tone grew into a sort of indignant howl, as he told of the damage that he had received.

"Then she is not there?" Catterton was terribly disappointed.

"No, siree!" replied the boy, emphatically. "Say, sport, who's a-goin' to pay for my trowsers, wot that purp tored?"

"Here's a dollar," said the "Marquis," taking out his wallet and handing the boy a bill. Shorty took the dollar with great readiness.

"You're a reg'lar red-hot rooster, you are!" cried the newsboy, fully satisfied. "Say, sport, am I for to keep my eye peeled arter the gal?"

"Yes; if you discover any thing relative to her whereabouts, come to me instantly," said Catterton.

"Oh, I'll do it, you bet high on that!" and Shorty took his departure, fully satisfied.

"Hoff the track, again!" cried Jim.

"Yes, and I don't know how to get on, unless to employ one of these Private Detectives to 'spot' this Bill and watch where he goes to; for of course he will visit the girl wherever he has placed her. It puts my blood in a flame whenever I think of her being in this brutal devil's power. If I ever get my hands on him again, I'll settle the account between us in full, and perhaps with ample interest!"

The flashing eyes of the "Marquis," the big veins that, in his excitement, swelled out like whipcord on the sides of his forehead, boded ill to English Bill, if they should chance to meet.

A knock at the door caused the "Marquis" to pause in his work.

Going to the door, he opened it; a boot-black, a little fellow about eight or nine years old, stood there.

"Do Mister Catterton live here?" asked the boy.

"Yes, that's my name, said the "Marquis."

"Here's a letter, sir," and the boy gave a dirty brown envelope into Catterton's hand.

"Who gave it to you?"

"A gem'man in the street, sir," said the boy, retreating down-stairs.

Catterton closed the door and opened the envelope, which was directed in a wretched bad hand to "Mr. Catterton." The letter, which was a frightful scrawl, read as follows:

"RESPEKED SIR

"I hear as how you wants to now bout a girl as English bill took away. If You will kum to peer foot of 40 street, east River, to Night at 9 o'clock i will be ther & if You will come Down with the Sugar i will tell You whar She is

"no more from yours,

"A FRIEND."

The "Marquis" read this delightful piece of compositon aloud.

"Vell, what do you think of it?" asked Jim.

"I think it's some fellow that knows of Bill's carrying off Iola—perhaps assisted in the act—and is now willing for 'sugar' to betray him," replied Catterton.

"Perhaps it's a plant!" suggested Jim.

"I'll risk it and go!" said Catterton, decided-y.

"I'm with you then!" cried Jim.

"Pier foot of Fortieth street. It's a lonely spot at nine o'clock; but we'll go, if Satan himself stood in the way." The blood of the "Marquis" was up.

The two men remained quietly in the room till evening came; then they dressed themselves in their rough suits, and taking their revolvers, which they carefully loaded, about eight o'clock, they started. The two walked over to the Bowery and took a Second Avenue car to Fortieth street.

At Fortieth street, the two left the car and walked slowly down the street toward the river.

"You had better lay behind and let me go ahead," said Catterton. "If this man is all right, two of us coming may alarm him. If there is anything wrong, you will be near enough to assist me," said the "Marquis."

"Hall right! jest has you say, my noble dook!" replied the Englishman.

"If I am attacked, don't come till I call you."

"I'm fly!"

So the Englishman stopped until the "Marquis" had got about a half a block ahead of him, as he judged, for the night was too dark for him to see distinctly. Then he followed, loosening his revolver in his pocket.

"I've a sort of suspicion that I'll need you, old boy, you know?" he addressed the remark to the revolver.

Catterton proceeded onward with a firm step to the river.

The "Marquis" reached the pier. No one was in sight. The entire neighborhood seemed deserted.

"There isn't any one here," said Catterton, looking around trying to distinguish if there was any one about. "I suppose I had better walk out to the end of the pier, then if he does come, I won't miss him." So out to the end of the pier walked Catterton.

As he approached the end of the pier he fancied he distinguished a figure through the thick gloom that hung like a dark vail over the surface of the restless, heaving waters. The waves flung themselves, with a dull, mournful sound, incessantly against the spiles of the dock, as though singing a requiem for the dead.

The sound of the mournful, monotonous dash of the waves struck the ears of the "Marquis" unpleasantly. Never before had the sound of the ocean surges seemed so like the despairing cry of human woe. It came upon the ear of the young man like the wail of a lost soul drifting hopeless and in agony down the tide of doom.

Despite his coolness, despite his nerve, the "Marquis" shivered at the oft-recurring splash of the night-waters.

"By Jove!" muttered the "Marquis," as he advanced slowly through the gloom, "there is some one sitting on that bulkhead."

The "Marquis," as he approached nearer, could plainly see that it was the figure of a man.

"He don't seem to notice my approach," said Catterton to himself; "I wonder if he is asleep?"

Then the "Marquis," being quite close, saw that the man—who wore a heavy overcoat of dark material, of the pea-jacket style—was sitting with his back to the shore and his face turned to the river, as if he was gazing out upon the moving tide.

"This must be my man, sure!" said Catterton, now almost at the stranger's side. "But it's funny he don't turn round. He must be deaf. I say, my friend, do you expect any one?" and he laid his hand on the man's shoulder. The man turned, and Catterton saw the face of English Bill.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CHILD MARKED WITH THE ACE OF SPADES.

THE "Marquis" had little time for reflection after discovering that the stranger was English Bill, for that worthy instantly flung himself upon Catterton. The attack was so sudden that the "Marquis" was in the grip of the rough, almost before he guessed his purpose. The two men closed together in a desperate struggle. The rough was far the stronger of the two, the "Marquis" the more skillful.

"Help, boys!" cried Bill, as, clutching the "Marquis" with an iron gripe, he essayed to throw him to the ground.

Catterton saw that he was in a desperate plight. A few minutes more and the roughs would reinforce English Bill, and once in the power of Bill's gang, the young man knew full well that his fate was sealed.

At the commencement of the struggle, Bill had somewhat the advantage, having taken Catterton by surprise. But as they swayed violently to and fro on the surface of the dock, the "Marquis," wily and supple as a snake, managed to break the hold of the rough and secured an "under grip" upon Bill. It was that worthy's game to throw the "Marquis," if possible, or else hold him till the ruffians came to his assistance. It was the "Marquis'" object to avoid being thrown and to break loose from

the rough, so as to be ready either to fly or encounter the reinforcement.

Desperate was the struggle.

Then to the ears of Catterton came the sound of feet advancing rapidly up the pier. He guessed at once that it was English Bill's gang.

A minute more and the "Marquis" felt that he was a doomed man unless he freed himself from the determined clutch of the rough.

Exerting all his strength, Catterton made a last desperate effort. Twisting himself about the rough, he got, despite the strenuous efforts of Bill, to prevent it—what is termed, in wrestling parlance, the "hook" on him. A mighty effort of the muscles of the "Marquis," and English Bill was hurled headlong on the pier. Skill had conquered strength.

The "Marquis" had little time for reflection, for a dozen dark forms were closing rapidly in upon him. The roughs barred the way to the land.

Catterton felt that successful resistance was impossible, so with a cry of defiance he leaped into the dark waters that rolled so swiftly by the end of the pier.

The splash of the young man's fall was answered by a howl of rage from a dozen throats as the roughs gathered on the pier-head, and watched for the reappearance of the man that they had destined for their victim.

English Bill, who was badly shaken up by the heavy fall he had got, uttered a storm of curses as he watched, and watched in vain for his foe to appear.

The night was so dark, and the darkness covered so the bosom of the waters, that even if the "Marquis" had appeared on the surface of the tide, ten feet from the pier-head, it would have been impossible for the roughs to have seen him.

"I guess he's drowned!" said Curly Rocks, who had led the roughs on.

"Blast him!" cried Bill, whose anger had not been lessened by the heavy thump that he had got by striking the dock. "He couldn't stay under water all this time."

"P'haps he can't swim, an' drowned right off," said Curly.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour, eagerly watching to discover some sign of his face, Bill at last came to the conclusion that the "Marquis" had indeed perished.

"Well—he's out of the way, anyhow," said Bill, somewhat consoled by the thought, though he had longed to get another crack at his foe.

So with the conviction fully implanted in their minds that "Dan the Devil" had indeed found a grave in the rushing tide of the East river, the roughs left the pier.

It was on the morning preceding the night that these events transpired, that Curly Rocks had the interview with the mysterious Mr. A. B., that ended with his departing with that gentleman and Cranston, the detective, to visit the person who could give the information relative to the lost child.

While the three are on their way to the house of Patsy Duke, in Fortieth street—for that celebrated hostelry, known to the public as the "Dew Drop," and to the police as "Duke's Crib," was the destination to which Curly was conducting the two gentlemen—we will visit Iola in her prison, in that same house, to which she had been consigned by English Bill.

Iola had passed a sleepless night. Early in the morning Bill brought in a large stone pitcher of water and a small loaf of bread. "prison fare," as the ruffian observed with a grin.

Iola, after Bill had departed, did not hesitate to partake of the simple fare. She was determined to escape, and she knew that she needed strength for the attempt, and fasting was not the way to gain it.

The girl carefully examined her prison. The room was partially lighted by the heart-shaped holes in the shutters. Iola tried the windows but they were securely nailed down. Then she examined the door. The lock was fitted in the wood, but there was no chance to pry back the bolt, even if she had had the necessary tools for such an attempt.

The heart of the girl sunk within her as she saw how securely she was fastened in her prison.

Last of all Iola examined the little closet. And as she stood in the closet doorway, gazing at the white wall before her, the thought suddenly occurred to the girl, that if the room adjoining the closet was empty, she might tunnel a hole through the wall of the closet—which was in all probability but a mere partition of laths and plaster—and by that means penetrate to the other room. Probably from that room she could get into the entry and so escape from the house.

But the first thing was to ascertain if the front room was empty. So Iola rapped loudly on the partition. No answer came; nor could the girl, listening intently with her ear close to the wall, hear any one moving in the room adjoining the closet.

Iola was satisfied that the room was empty.

The next movement on the part of the girl was to find some instrument by means of which she might displace the plaster of the wall.

Eagerly she searched for the means of freedom. Fortune aided Iola, for in a corner of the drawer of the table she found an old and rusty knife-blade. No girl deep in love ever clutched the first letter from the loved one with more eagerness than Iola seized upon the old knife-blade.

With the knife-blade Iola commenced to pick away the plaster, and as each little piece fell to the floor, she thought she was so much nearer freedom.

Iola listened intently while she worked, so that she should not be surprised at her labor by her jailers. But no footsteps rung through the passageway, and at last the point of the knife glided through the partition without meeting with any impediment.

As the girl had thought, the partition was quite a slight one.

Through the little hole made by the knife-blade in the wall, Iola could look into the adjoining room. It was an apartment about the same size as the one that served for her prison, but, unlike that one, it was bare of furniture, and the windows, which were without shutters, let in the light freely. Evidently the room was unoccupied. Iola's heart beat gladly when she made the discovery. Escape now seemed certain.

Then a sudden thought came to the mind of the imprisoned girl. To pass now in broad daylight through the entry, and out of the house without being seen, would be difficult, if not impossible. But if she should wait until it was dark, in the darkness she could escape.

These thoughts passed rapidly through Iola's brain. So she determined to wait until nightfall before she made the attempt to escape.

She carefully picked up from the floor of the closet the pieces of plaster that she had extracted with the knife from the wall, and hid them in the stove. Then she hung her cloak upon a nail in the closet, and the garment concealed the hole she had made in the wall.

Having nothing else to do, Iola sat down by the table to wait the approach of darkness, that was so many hours away.

In Iola's thoughts one face, one form, alone was present, and the long hours passed swiftly away, while she sat and thought of the man who was all in all to her in this world.

Iola was startled from her reverie by the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs, and approaching the door of her room, but the footsteps did not pause there but went by, and apparently entered the room that the closet adjoined.

The girl, with one of those sudden thoughts that sometimes flash across the mind, determined to see who these men were. She knew that by the aid of the hole she had made with the knife in the closet wall, she could easily look into the other room, and not only see but hear.

She had a fancy that probably she might learn something that might assist her in escaping from the hands of English Bill.

So Iola sprung to the closet, and lifting up the cloak, looked through the hole in the plaster into the other room.

Leaving Iola at her post of observation, we will return to Curly Rocks and the two gentlemen that he was conducting.

The party had taken a Second avenue car and got off at Fortieth street.

Curly conducted the two to the saloon known as the "Dew Drop."

In the saloon, Curly introduced English Bill to them as the party who could give them the information that they desired.

"Hain't you got an empty room, Biddy, where I can take the two gents for to talk over a little business?" asked Bill of Patsy Duke's "better half."

"Yis, the front wan, shure; up wan flight, beyant the wan where the girl is," answered the lady, who was a stout Hibernian dame.

"Jest foller me, gents," said Bill, leading the way up-stairs. Brown and the detective followed, while Curly Rocks brought up the rear.

When they were in the room, and the door was closed behind them—the room was a large unfurnished apartment—Bill began the interview:

"I believe one of you gents wants a little information 'bout a lost child?"

"Yes," responded Brown, "I am that person."

"Well, now, to have the matter all straight, let's see if you mean the same babby that I does," said Bill.

"Certainly," replied Brown.

"This babby was a girl 'bout a year old. In 1852, a feller wot was carrying her under his cloak, along Thirtieth street, got hit in the head with a slung-shot—knocked down, and the babby taken away from him."

"So far, correct."

"The babby had on the left shoulder an ace of spades, just about the same size as the one in a pack of cards."

"Yes, that is the child whose fate I wish to know," said Brown.

"Well, now," said Bill, slowly, "I'm the only

man that knows anything 'bout this here babby, an' what's 'come of her; but in the first place I wants a little information."

"Indeed!" said Brown, with an air of astonishment.

"Yes, an' if I don't get my information, I don't think you'll get any—or at least, not out of me," replied Bill, doggedly.

"What is it you wish to know?" asked Brown.

"In the first place, the name of the child; in the second place, the names of her father and mother," responded the rough.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A STORY OF THE PAST.

FOR a moment Brown did not reply to this rather insulting demand. He seemed to be thinking the matter over. At last he spoke:

"Though I question your right to ask this, yet I will answer you. I do not know the name of the child, nor the name of its father."

"What?" cried Bill, in astonishment, while Cranston, the detective, laughed in his sleeve, and mentally pronounced Mr. Brown to be fully a match for the grasping rough.

"The child is the child of shame," continued Brown, coldly; "its father never owned it, and its mother died on the very night that the child was lost."

"Why are you so anxious 'bout the affair, then?" asked Bill, considerably disappointed at the intelligence he had received.

"I'm a relative of the mother," said Brown.

"Oh, then the girl ain't a heir?"

"No."

"Well, that settles the matter," and Bill looked decidedly disappointed.

"Will you give me the information?"

"For twenty-five dollars I'll tell you all I knows about it," said the rough.

"Can I trust you?" asked Brown, looking at him searchingly.

"Just you ask Dick Cranston!" said Bill, indignantly, pointing to the detective.

Curly Rocks, who knew the name but not the man, now understood how Mr. "Smith" knew him so well, and wondered at his own stupidity in not guessing him to be a detective.

"Why, you remember me, Bill, eh?" said Cranston.

"Oh, I never forgets gents in your line of business," said Bill, with a grin.

"I think Bill's square if he says so," observed the detective.

"You bet!" responded the rough.

"Here are the twenty-five dollars. Now give me the particulars," Brown said, handing the money to Bill.

"All right!" said Bill, pocketing the money. "I'm a gent when I'm treated like one. Now, first an' foremost, I was one of the fellers mixed up in the affair on Thirtieth street. Arter I got hold of the babby, I thought as how I would keep it until a reward was offered, an' then I'd bring it forward an' get the reward. Well, I held on to the babby 'bout a week an' no reward was offered, so I thought I'd get rid on it, an' sell it to Irish Molly to go a-beggin' with. You see I took the babby home to my wife—she were in the the-a-ter line, an' a blasted sight too good for me. We had a kid of our own, just about the same age as the strange babby. Well, my wife took an awful fancy to the child, an' wanted me to adopt it, but, in course, I couldn't see any of that gammon, 'cos when I wanted to wallop my wife, then she'd go for the babby an' hold it up to keep me away; an' I knew that if she got two kids, I'd never have a chance to give her a decent licking. Well, the very day I were a-goin' to sell the child to Moll, I got into a fuss with a cove an' got locked up for a week. When I come out, the little beggar that I picked up in Thirtieth street was dead an' buried. You see, I s'pose the little babby caught cold in the rain."

"Have you any notice of the death of the child—any proof?" asked Brown.

"Why, what an awful man you are to convince!" exclaimed Bill, in disgust. "But I have got a notice. My old woman had a regular funeral with a hack for the babby. She called it Lelia Thompson, 'cos we didn't know what its name was—my old woman was awful arter names. She called our own kid Iola—an' in course the babby had to have a name. Here's the notice from the Sun," and Bill took a scrap of paper, yellow with age, from his pocket-book.

The notice read:

"THOMPSON—Suddenly on Tuesday, Oct. 2d, Lelia, infant daughter of William and Iola Thompson, aged one year."

"You see my woman wrote it 'adopted daughter,' but it got changed," said Bill.

"I am fully satisfied," said Brown, "but now let me ask you a question."

"Certainly," said Bill.

"As this child is dead, why were you so anxious to know if the girl was an heir?"

Bill's face was covered by a broad grin.

"You see," he said, "I don't mind telling

you, since it won't work. I thought that if the girl was an heir, why I might bring my girl, Iola, fo'ward and swear that she was the babby that I picked up, an' make a strike for it. Don't you see?"

Mr. Brown did see, and he could not help admiring the shrewd device of the ruffian.

"How would you have got over the shoulder-mark, Bill?" asked Cranston.

"Well, I guess I could put an 'ace of spades' on some way, if I had to stamp it on with a brand," said the brutal ruffian.

Having gained the information that they were in search of, Brown and the detective left the house, while Bill and Curly again entered the saloon.

"Well, that settles the fate of the child," said Cranston, as he and Brown walked up Fortieth street.

"Yes, there isn't any doubt about the matter. The child is dead, and the father shall know it before the night is over!" There was a tone of fierce joy in the voice of the speaker as he spoke.

"It was a good deal of trouble, but you run the scent to earth at last," said Cranston.

"Yes, and to-night my vengeance begins!"

Cranston looked at the speaker, and thought to himself that he shouldn't like to have this mysterious Mr. Brown for a foe.

In detailing these events, we have gone back a little in our story, as this interview took place in the forenoon, while the adventures of the "Marquis," on the pier, that we have previously detailed, happened in the night of the same day. Having filled up the slight gap in our narrative, we will return to the "Marquis," and explain how he had escaped death, when he sought refuge from the assault of the roughs in the waters of the East river, for the "Marquis" had escaped.

Catterton knew fully what he was about when he leaped into the river. He was a capital swimmer, and upon striking the water, he let the tide carry him to where it swept into a little eddy around the corner of the pier. Once around the corner and in under the pier, holding on to one of the spiles that supported it, he was fully concealed from sight and could hear the roughs above him debating as to his fate.

He heard them plainly when they retired from the pier. Then he left his hiding-place and swam gently along the side of the dock till he came to where a little flight of wooden steps led down into the water. These he mounted carefully, not knowing but that some one of the ruffians might still be lurking in the neighborhood.

With the water dripping from his garments in little rivulets, the "Marquis" stepped from the stairway upon the pier. A man came toward him from out of the gloom of the night.

"Discovered, by Jove!" cried Catterton, between his teeth.

The man came straight to him, and to the delight of the "Marquis," he discovered the stranger was Jim.

"Hare you hall right?" asked Jim, eagerly.

"Yes, thanks to the water," replied the "Marquis."

"I saw them blasted roughs make a rush for you, but I knew that his you wanted me, why you'd call; so I just stole quietly behind 'em. I 'eard the splash when you jumped into the water. I knew that you could swim like a duck, and that you were hall right. So I've just been scouting 'round 'ere for to 'elp you when you came hout, you know."

"It was a trap, Jim, as I feared," said Catterton.

"Hand you're no wiser than you were before?"

"No, except that now I am sure that Iola is in the hands of this ruffian. I'll see a detective to-morrow and hunt him down," said Catterton, earnestly.

"Hand now, we'd better go 'ome. You're hall wet," said Jim.

"Yes, for I can do nothing to-night."

So the "Marquis" and Jim proceeded at once to the room of the former on Broadway.

They reached the room about ten o'clock.

When the "Marquis" lighted the gas, Jim saw a letter on the floor that had evidently been pushed in under the door. He picked it up and saw that it was directed to Daniel Catterton.

"Ere's a letter for you, 'Marquis,'" said Jim. Catterton was busy getting into dry clothes.

"I'll look at it in a moment," he said.

When Catterton had finished dressing, he opened the letter. It was from Loyal Tremaine—Catterton had given Tremaine his address the morning he had received the check from him—and it contained an urgent request that he—Catterton—should call upon the writer the moment he received the message, even if it were midnight.

The "Marquis" read the letter aloud.

"What the deuce can 'e want, you know?" said Jim, in astonishment.

"I can hardly guess," returned Catterton, evasively.

"Perhaps 'e wants the thousand back!" suggested Jim.

"No, I do not think that is likely," replied the "Marquis," with quite a cloud upon his brow. "But I will go at once and see what

he does want. Remain here, Jim, until I return."

Then the "Marquis" descended the stairs to Broadway, jumped into an omnibus, and was soon rolling on his way up-town.

"There is but one thing that I can guess of in the world, that would make him send such an urgent message to me. How could Tremaine discover it? No, it is impossible! I am the only one living that holds the secret," muttered the "Marquis," lost in thought as he proceeded up-town.

In due time Catterton rung the bell of the Tremaine mansion, and on making known who he was, he was at once ushered into the library, where sat Loyal Tremaine.

Tremaine looked pale and anxious. Hardly returning the greeting of the young man, he put a letter into his hands and bade him read it.

The contents of the letter astonished the "Marquis," for it referred to that secret that he supposed he alone held, and not one syllable of which had he ever breathed to mortal soul.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Tremaine, evidently deeply concerned.

"It is all true, sir," returned Catterton, slowly; "but that the secret is known, I would rather have had my tongue torn out by the roots than have betrayed my share in it. But now, sir, you shall know all;" and briefly the "Marquis" related to Loyal Tremaine a strange story.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Tremaine, in joy, when Catterton had finished. "Oh! what a load you have taken off my mind!"

"Can you forgive my deception?" asked the "Marquis," feeling that he had wronged the man before him, though the holiest love on earth had urged that wrong.

"Yes! a thousand times, yes!" cried Tremaine. "Your deception will now bring joy to three hearts that I thought were doomed to be wretched forever."

"I cannot understand how this man who wrote this letter can have gained this knowledge, which I believed was possessed by myself alone," said Catterton, in wonder.

"It is strange," responded Tremaine, thoughtfully. "He says in his note that he will call upon me to-morrow afternoon, at two, to prove that he has written nothing but the truth. Suppose you come at the same hour, then you can confront this man."

"Very well, sir, I will," answered Catterton.

"I have great cause for joy, and yet some cause for sorrow, but it cannot be altered now; perhaps it is all for the best."

"I hope so, sir," said the "Marquis," as he took his departure.

When the "Marquis" gained the street, his brain was in a whirl with the busy thoughts that filled it.

"I'll walk down; the night-air will cool my head," he said, as he took his way down the avenue.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DESPERATE DEED.

IOLA waited until after Bill brought in her meager supper and a lighted candle, before she recommenced her attempt to escape from her prison.

Bill locked the door behind him as usual.

Iola made but a light supper. She could not eat. All her thoughts, all her wishes, were concentrated on one object, and that object was to free herself from the power of her brutal tyrant, whom she hated now ten times more bitterly than she had ever done before.

Iola waited until she heard a distant bell ring out nine o'clock on the night-air.

"Now I shall not be disturbed," she said, as, with the blade of the knife for a weapon, she made an attack upon the wall of the closet.

And at the very moment that the girl was, with blistered hands, piercing the closet wall, the "Marquis," her protector—not five hundred yards from her—was engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter with English Bill.

At the end of an hour Iola had removed all the plaster from a place about two feet square. Nothing now remained but the thin laths to bar her passage into the other room.

The girl had set the candle down upon the floor near her, so as to give her light, and also to prevent it from throwing its rays through the holes in the shutters, and thus betray to any one outside, who might chance to look up, that she had not retired to rest.

Another hour of hard work, and but two laths remained.

Escape seemed so near that the heart of the girl beat joyfully. She did not mind the pain of her bleeding hands, torn here and there by the splinters of the wood, or chafed into blisters by the knife, that, lacking a handle, was extremely difficult to use.

Yet still, cheerfully, despite the obstacles, Iola worked on. Each cut of the knife brought her so much nearer freedom; each lath that she had broken off and thrown to the floor was a barrier between her and the "Marquis" removed.

Iola did not doubt for a single instant that if she succeeded in getting into the other room, she could easily make her way into the street, and once there she was free—free to go where she liked.

"Oh! to-morrow I shall feel his arms around me; to-morrow, perhaps, I shall feel his kiss upon my lips, for he will kiss me if he's half as glad to see me as I shall be to see him, and I do not doubt that!" she murmured, as she toiled without ceasing at the wall.

Then, with her slender fingers she broke off another lath—that she had sawed through with the knife—and cast it down.

"One more!" she cried, in glee. "One more and then I'm free! Oh! how Bill will swear when he comes in the morning and finds that the cage is empty and the bird gone. I will never be trapped again as I am this time!"

And so, with a heart beating high at the thoughts of that freedom that seemed so near—yet might be so far, for a hundred things might happen to defeat her plans—Iola cut into the last remaining lath.

The little hands were sore indeed, but the girl needed not the pain.

The lath broke in her grip; she cast it to the floor beside the others.

"At last!" she cried, in triumph.

The way of escape was open; already in imagination she was in the glad embrace of the man she loved so well.

Iola rose to her feet. Her limbs ached. She had been so long upon her knees in incessant toil that at first she could hardly stand.

Just as the girl was about to crawl through the hole that she had made in the wall, the key in the lock of the door turned suddenly, the door opened and Bill entered. The rough was in his stocking feet; he had drawn off his boots and crept up-stairs slyly, as though with a purpose to surprise the girl.

Iola uttered a slight scream as her eyes fell upon the figure of the rough. The attempted escape was discovered. The truth could not be disguised; yet in the scream of the girl there was more of anger than alarm.

"So, my beauty, you were a-goin' away without even havin' the perliteness for to come an' say 'good-by' to your 'fectionate friends,' said Bill, with mock respect. Iola saw at once that the rough had been drinking heavily. His inflamed eyes and flushed face would have told her so, if his manner had not.

"Goin' to git up an' dust, were you, my lady-bird? Wasn't it lucky that I thought I'd come up an' see arter your health? I think so much of you, my dear; you know I do, don't you?" and the rough laughed a drunken, brutal laugh.

Iola felt that she was becoming desperate. To be detected at the very moment that the way of escape lay open before her was bitter indeed.

"Why don't you answer me when I speak to you, you she-devil, you? Goin' to run away ag'in, was you? Where was you a-goin', hey?" demanded the drunken ruffian, swaying unsteadily in the doorway.

"Anywhere out of your reach!" cried Iola, desperately.

"Well, that's nice conduct for a dootiful darter, I must say," cried Bill, indignantly.

"And a nice father you are!" returned the girl, in scorn, her eyes flashing fire and her white teeth clenched convulsively together.

"Don't you talk back to me, you young whelp!" exclaimed Bill, in a rage. "I know where you are a-goin'! You want to go to that 'Marquis,' but you won't go to him not no more. I've fixed him!"

"What do you mean?" asked Iola.

"Why, I just wrote him a letter wot said as how if he'd come to the pier foot of Fortieth street, that he'd hear news of a little gal that had been took away," and Bill laughed discordantly as he told of the nice little trap that he had laid for the young man.

"And he came?"

"Yes, in course he did, an' I were a-waitin' on the end of the pier for him. When he see'd my face, he started as if he had seen a ghost, an' then I went for him lively! The end of it was that I pitched him into the water, an' I don't doubt that the fishes are a-feedin' on the flesh of your lover now!" Bill had not held quite to the truth in his narrative of his encounter with the "Marquis," as the reader has probably observed. He omitted all account of how that gentleman had pitched him to the earth as if he had been a sack of wheat.

Bill's story made but little impression upon Iola. She did not believe one single word that he had said. As to the "Marquis" suffering injury at the hands of Bill in a fair encounter, she utterly repudiated the idea.

"You don't seem to care much 'bout his death," said Bill, in astonishment. He had expected that the girl would give way to a flood of tears.

"I don't believe what you say," replied Iola, in scorn.

"You don't believe me?" cried Bill, in wonder, not unmixed with rage.

"No, I do not!" reaffirmed the girl.

"Well, it's the truth!" cried Bill.

Iola looked at him with scorn fully expressed in her large eyes, but made no reply.

"What did you make that hole for, say?" demanded Bill, although he hadn't much doubt as to the girl's purpose.

"To escape from this prison that you have put me in!" replied Iola, undaunted.

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Bill, astonished and angered at the boldness of the reply.

"Yes, and sooner or later I will escape from you!" cried the girl, drawing up her slender figure to its utmost height, while fierce determination shone in the flashing eyes.

"Do you want me to murder you?" cried Bill, savagely, advancing a little way into the room.

"I don't doubt that you want to do it, you utter coward!" cried the girl, hotly, retreating to the table as she spoke.

"If I lift my arm to you now, you won't have any lover to interfere, curse him!" cried Bill.

"No, if he were here—whom you call my lover, but whom I only know as the kind-hearted gentleman who dared to protect me, the poor girl—you would not dare to threaten me!" exclaimed Iola, not at all frightened by the threatening manner of the rough.

"He'll never protect you, not no more!" cried Bill, fiercely, and with the utmost contempt for the rules of Lindley Murray. "He's gone where the dogs won't find him, an' I put him there."

"If you have harmed him, you attacked him treacherously, then, behind his back!" cried the girl.

"You lie, you little devil, you!" howled Bill, in a rage, advancing with uplifted arm to strike the girl. But, quick as thought, Iola emptied the water from the heavy pitcher upon the floor, and raised the pitcher as if to hurl it at the head of the ruffian.

Bill recoiled, more in astonishment than in alarm, when he beheld this display of spirit upon the part of the girl whom he had beaten so often, and who before had never attempted to resist.

"Well, I'm blessed if this don't get me!" said Bill, in astonishment, as he gazed upon the slight girlish figure that stood so defiantly before him. "What are you a-goin' to do with that pitcher?" he asked.

"Throw it at your head, if you come near me!" was the startling reply that the ruffian received.

"Why, look a-here, gal, you're mad!" cried Bill.

"No, I am not, but I am desperate. I would rather die than stay here with you, now that I know what I do! I am a child no longer, but a woman, and if you come near me, I will hurt you!"

"Put down that pitcher!" yelled Bill, maddened by the words, and his passion increased by the bad whisky he had drank.

"I will not!" cried Iola, desperately.

"I'll make you!" cried Bill; and, regardless of her threatening attitude, he rushed toward her.

Iola was as good as her word, for, as Bill advanced, she hurled the heavy pitcher with all her force at his head. Bill attempted to dodge, but the attempt was made too late. The heavy pitcher, flying through the air with no slight force, struck him full in the temple and sprawled him over on his back, stunned and bleeding; the pitcher breaking into pieces at the force of the blow.

With a scream of joy, Iola seized her hat and cloak, leaped over the body of the prostrate man, ran down the stairs, through the entry and into the street.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MARQUIS'S PATENT OF NOBILITY.

CATTERTON, on his homeward way, reached Union square just as the clocks were striking twelve.

The young man was perplexed; the more he thought of the strange knowledge evidently possessed by the man who had written Tremaine the note, the more he was mystified.

"How could any one else guess the secret that I alone know, or, at least, that I thought was in my possession alone?" exclaimed the "Marquis," who could guess no solution to the riddle.

Catterton crossed Union square and continued on down Broadway.

As the "Marquis" passed Astor place, a girl in a light dress and dark cloak turned into Broadway just ahead of him.

The girl hurried on, as if afraid of being pursued. The figure was strangely familiar to Catterton. He resolved to see who it was, and quickened his steps. He gained rapidly upon the girl. She hearing the noise of his footstep, turned her head in alarm to discover who it was that was behind her. And to the joy of the young man, he saw the face of the abducted girl.

"Iola!" he cried.

"Daniel!" she exclaimed, in joy, and, without reflecting that she was in the public street, and that—though the hour was late—there might be many passing by to wonder at her

action, she threw herself, with a half-sob upon his breast.

For a moment the "Marquis" was as thoughtless as the girl, for he strained the little figure to his breast with an earnestness that told plainly how great was his joy at meeting her. Then, releasing her, he drew her arm within his own, and they proceeded on down Broadway.

Briefly, Iola told the story of her escape from the power of the ruffian, English Bill.

After getting into the street, which she reached without molestation, she ran forward, turning to the right, without any thought except the one of getting away from the neighborhood of the house that had served for her prison as soon as possible. Luckily, she had turned in the right direction, and soon reached Second avenue. Inquiring the way from a passer-by, she ran on down the avenue; then went through Thirtieth street to Third avenue, and down Third avenue until she reached the Cooper Institute. Then she went through Astor place to Broadway; and so chanced to meet with the young man.

"But where are you going?" asked Catterton, after she had finished.

"Where could I go but to you?" asked Iola, innocently. "You are the only friend I have in the world. The moment that I gained my freedom I remembered that you had told me about your room on Broadway. I remembered the number, too, and I was coming to you as fast as I could."

The heart of the "Marquis" gave a great leap for joy at the words of the girl.

"How lucky it was that I met you," she continued, as they walked on, arm in arm. "Heaven seems to have directed my steps tonight."

"Yes," replied Catterton, "and now that I have recovered you, I'll take good care that I don't lose you again."

The two reached the room of the "Marquis," and when Catterton entered it with Iola, the astonishment of Jim—who had been asleep on the sofa—was great indeed.

"Now, Iola, make yourself comfortable here to-night, and in the morning I'll find a new boarding-house for you, for I don't dare to trust you back at Mrs. Wiggins's, now that Bill knows that you were there. Jim and I will go to a hotel to-night, and I'll bring you some breakfast in the morning."

"Oh, you are so good!" murmured Iola, and the large blue eyes that looked at him were full of love indeed.

Jim took his hat and left the room.

"I'll wait for you hat the foot of the stair, you know," said Jim, as he departed. "Two's company hand three hain't, in a case like this, you know," he observed, quietly, to himself, as he descended the stairs.

"Oh, I'm not good," responded the young man, "not good at all," he continued; "almost any man that was a gentleman would have acted in the same way that I have. But good-night," and the "Marquis" held out his hand to Iola.

Eagerly the girl took the proffered hand, and then with a sudden impulse, threw her arms around his neck and held up her lips to his; and as Catterton gazed in the young face so full of love—as he lightly touched the full, red lips and felt their dewy fragrance upon his own, he became conscious that he loved the girl, whose slender figure he held within his arms.

"Good-night!" again he said, and again he touched the lips that so willingly received his kiss. "Oh, Iola!" he cried, impulsively, "I believe I love you!"

"And I know that I love you!" replied the girl, with the charming frankness of innocence. "I have loved you ever since the night when I first met you on Broadway, and I shall love you always."

And thus the lovers parted.

That night the "Marquis" dreamed only of the blue-eyed girl that at last he was conscious that he loved, and Iola's visions were of rest, of peace, and eternal love, as the wife of Daniel Catterton.

Morning came, and about eight o'clock Catterton, with a breakfast of dainty viands on a waiter, procured from a neighboring eating-house, knocked at the door of the cosey apartment that held the girl he loved.

Upon entering, he found that Iola had been busily engaged in examining his little library.

Bright and cheerful looked the girl. A single night had banished all traces of her imprisonment from her face.

Iola did justice to the breakfast, while the "Marquis" sat and wondered at the prettiness of the girl he had won.

At Catterton's request, Iola gave a full account of her abduction by English Bill, and of her adventures in the old rookery in Fortieth street; not forgetting to relate in full the conversation between Bill and the stranger, in the front room, that she had overheard through the hole in the wall. She also told Catterton what a strange bearing that conversation had on her life, and the knowledge the conversation she had overheard had given her.

Catterton was almost speechless with astonishment. The revelation of the mystery that had so astonished him, coming from this unexpected source, excited his wonder. He had never dreamed that the girl that he had befriended, simply from motives of humanity, had any connection with his past life, or held in her hands the key to the riddle that had puzzled him.

"Can this be true?" he exclaimed, in wonder.

"Yes, all true," replied the girl.

Then Catterton told Iola the history of the child marked with the ace of spades, and how the lightning had imprinted the mark upon the shoulder. He also told her of his connection with the affair, and how the wealthy Fifth-avenue gentleman, Loyal Tremaine, was interested in it.

The "Marquis" now fully understood how the stranger, who had written the note that had agitated Tremaine so greatly, had gained his knowledge, for he was evidently the same person that had held the interview with English Bill; the particulars of which Iola had just related to him.

The mystery that had puzzled the young man was a mystery no longer.

"This is the strangest combination of circumstances that I have ever heard of," exclaimed the "Marquis," in wonder.

"But it ends in happiness," said Iola, a bright smile illuminating her features.

"Alas," replied Catterton, with a sigh; "I fear that it will end unhappily for me."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Iola, in astonishment.

"Iola, I told you last night that I loved you," said the "Marquis," slowly.

"Yes, and I told you that I loved you," replied Iola, quickly and frankly.

"That is what makes me unhappy," replied Catterton.

Iola opened her eyes wide in astonishment.

"I cannot understand you!" she exclaimed; "are you unhappy because you love me and I return that love?"

"Yes," replied the "Marquis," sadly.

"But why should that make you unhappy?" questioned Iola.

"Because I fear that our love is hopeless, and that our union is impossible."

"Who will prevent it, if you and I be willing?" asked Iola in astonishment.

"The one that has the right to do so," replied Catterton.

"You mean my father?" said Iola.

"Yes."

"He will not keep me from wedding you; that is—if you will have me," and Iola looked shyly and cunningly into the face of her lover.

"You know that there can not be a doubt about that, Iola," replied Catterton. "I have loved you for some time, although I was really not conscious that I did love you until I held you in my arms last night. It will be the proudest day of my life when I stand with you before the altar and have the right to call you mine forever."

"And if I live, you shall have that right!" cried Iola, quickly. "You are the only friend that I have ever had in the world. Your lips are the only ones that have ever spoken kind words to me; do you think that I could ever forget that, though I should live to be a thousand years old?"

"Iola, time in this world changes many things," replied the "Marquis," and he spoke the truth.

"Time will not change me," replied the girl, decidedly.

"You think so now, Iola, but you are young; as you grow older, you will change."

"Never in my love for you!" said the girl, earnestly.

"Iola, you say that I am the only one that has ever treated you kindly—" —

"Yes," quickly cried the girl, interrupting him, "you are the only one."

"Perhaps, then, this feeling in your heart, which you think is love, is merely gratitude. In time, you may see some one else. You will then discover the truth, and just think how bitter it will be for me—who truly love you—to know then that you have discovered the truth." Catterton spoke earnestly, and his tone was clear evidence that he was deeply interested. "Iola," he continued, "I will not hold you to the avowal you made last night. I will give you your pledge of love back and forget your words. If in the future, you find that you do love me, then I shall only be too glad to accept and treasure your love."

For a moment Iola did not reply. The convulsive quivering of the lips, the flushed, grieved face, and the large tears that welled slowly into the loving blue eyes, proved how deeply the girl was affected.

"You do not love me at all," at last she said, slowly, and with a great effort forcing the tears back.

"Why do you say that?" asked Catterton, while he looked with sorrow upon the mournful face of the girl.

"Because if you did love me, you would not speak this way—you would not wish to drive

me from you!" replied Iola, and her face plainly expressed her heartfelt grief.

"Iola, I do not wish to take advantage of your fresh young heart. I wish you to know fully what you are doing when you say, you love me, and consent to become my wife. Iola, some people call me the 'Marquis,' I am proud of the title. Do you know why I am proud of it, and why I am called so?"

"No," answered Iola.

"Because they say that I never deserted a friend or treacherously injured an enemy—that my word was my bond, and that I kept that word, even at the risk of life. That is my patent of nobility. If I should accept this love, that you would so freely give me, without warning—without giving you time to think of what you are doing, I should disgrace my marquissip and lose all right to the title."

With every word that the young man uttered, Iola's love increased.

"You are so good!" she murmured.

"Iola, I love you better than I do myself—and self-love you know is strong—but not even that love shall prompt me to do you wrong."

"But if after this explanation—if I am sure that I love you—that I will never love any one else—you will not reject that love!" said Iola, imploringly, rising as she spoke, and extending her hands in supplication toward her lover.

"No; if after I have spoken so plainly, you say you love me, I shall believe you!"

With a cry of joy, Iola sprung into his arms.

"Oh, I do love you, so much!" she murmured, as she hid her flushed face on his breast.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY.

IT was in the afternoon following the morning that the scene between the lovers related in the preceding chapter took place, that Loyal Tremaine sat in the front parlor of his elegant mansion on Fifth avenue, and waited for the appearance of the stranger who had addressed him a note relative to one of the members of his household, and the note informed him that he would call that afternoon with proofs to back the assertions that he had made in the note.

The sliding doors that separated the front room from the back one, were shut; commonly they were open, thus throwing the two rooms into one.

The clock on the mantel struck two, and, punctual to the minute, a stranger ascended the steps of the Tremaine mansion, and ringing the bell, asked to be conducted to the presence of Mr. Loyal Tremaine.

In obedience to the orders he had received from his master, the servant instantly showed the visitor into the parlor where sat that gentleman.

Tremaine looked at the stranger with curiosity. He saw before him a tall, well-built man, probably forty-five years of age, with a strange, careworn face, fringed around by curling black hair, and lighted up by a pair of piercing black eyes.

The face looked very familiar to Tremaine, although he was almost certain that he had never seen his visitor before.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, Tremaine's guest was the gentleman who, in his interview with the detective, had called himself Mr. Alfred Brown.

"You are the person, I presume, who addressed a note to me yesterday?" Tremaine said.

"Yes, sir," replied the stranger, in a full, deep voice.

Tremaine started at the sound of the voice, and cast a searching glance at the stranger, which the other did not appear to heed in the least.

Tremaine could have sworn that he had heard the stranger's voice before—but where he could not tell. Vainly he searched his memory over; he could not remember.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, with a puzzled air, "I think I have met you before somewhere. Is it not so?"

"It is not probable," evasively returned the stranger.

"Ah, perhaps not," said Tremaine, yet in his own mind he was fully satisfied that he had seen the man who now stood before him, somewhere in the past. But where or when he could not divine.

"Well, sir, in your note you stated certain things—which you styled facts—about a member of my household."

"Yes, sir," said the stranger.

"You also stated that you could bring proofs to sustain what you asserted."

"I can, sir," replied the stranger.

"I am waiting, sir, to see what you have to say," said Tremaine, quite coolly.

The man who called himself Brown, cast a rapid glance at the face of Tremaine. He did not understand his coolness; he had expected to find him nervous and agitated. But now, even before he began the attack, that he had planned so carefully, the impression forced itself upon

his mind that Tremaine in some way was fully prepared to ward off the threatened blow. Yet, even with this idea in his mind, the stranger began the attack boldly.

"I wrote you in my note yesterday, that the girl that you call Essie Troy, and who, in reality, you think is your daughter, is not your child."

"You did; although I cannot guess where you can have gained the knowledge that she is my daughter, as that secret has been confided but to two persons."

"You mean that you think she is your daughter," said the stranger, curtly.

"Go on; we at present will waive that question," said Tremaine, blandly, and not at all agitated, much to the stranger's astonishment and disappointment, although he did not allow these feelings to become visible on his face.

"I stated that she was not your daughter, and I can prove that statement to be truth," said the stranger.

"Go on," repeated Tremaine.

"Then I must speak of the past. Do you remember the night of the 20th of September in the year 1852?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tremaine, firmly, although a shade passed across his face, as his memory went back to that fearful night.

"On the night of the 20th of September, 1852," said the stranger, in a cold, mechanical tone of voice, in which there was not the least trace of feeling, "Christine Averill, the mother of your child, and the victim of your crime—though a willing one—sat in a room on Forsyth street in this city; and without warning, before the erring wife stood Walter Averill, the sailor—her husband. He charged her with the wrong that she had done him; told her of the hearth that he had found desolate on his return from battling with the waves, and of the ruin that she had wrought. Terrified at his speech and thinking that the desperate man—for he was desperate—meant violence toward her or to the child of shame, sleeping in the cradle, she snatched the babe to her bosom, ran to the window and threw it open as if to call for help. But the husband did not mean personal violence to the woman that he still loved, in spite of the wrong that she had done him, or to the innocent babe, who could not help the guilt of its parents.

"Then the eyes of the sailor saw a card lying on the table with an address on it. He guessed instantly that it was the address of the man who had wronged him so fearfully. The address was written on the back of a playing-card—the ace of spades—fit emblem for such a man as he who penned the address.

"The husband approached the trembling woman with the babe in her arms, who stood by the window; and there, while fearing mortal justice, she was struck by the lightning of the Eternal. The man was struck to the ground by the force of the shock—the woman killed outright, and the babe indelibly marked for life; for when the man recovered and took the infant in his arms, he found the ace of spades imprinted from the card, by the lightning, upon the shoulder of the infant.

"Now then look upon the left shoulder of this girl whom you call Essie Troy—she that you think is the child of Christine Averill, and see if you will find there this mark that I speak of—the ace of spades?"

"It is useless to look, sir," replied Tremaine, calmly. "I can inform you at once that no such mark is upon her shoulder."

"Then you know now, that the person who gave her into your hands as the child of Christine Averill, deceived you?"

"Yes, I know that she is not my child," but to the stranger's wonder Tremaine took the intelligence quite coolly.

"You see, sir, that I have proved what I said I would," said the stranger, a gleam of triumph shining in his eyes.

"Yes, you have. But now, can you tell me one thing more? What did become of my child on that night—the babe with the mark on its shoulder?"

"I can," replied the stranger. "After the death of the woman, Averill took the child in his arms, and departed for Fifth avenue. His intention was to find the man that had wronged him, and kill him on the spot; but heaven evidently did not think that this guilty wretch was fit to die, for Walter Averill was waylaid by two ruffians on Thirtieth street, felled to the earth senseless by the blow of a slung-shot, and the child stolen from him."

Tremaine did not answer, but seemed plunged into deep thought.

For a moment the stranger was silent, then he spoke again:

"Are you satisfied that I have spoken the truth?" he asked.

"Yes, quite satisfied. But I knew that Essie Troy was not my child before you made this revelation."

"Indeed! how?" The cool stranger was amazed.

"Mr. Catterton!" said Tremaine, calling. The "Marquis" entered the room instantly from the back parlor through the sliding doors.

"Tell this gentleman about your share in the

events that took place on the night of September 20th, 1852."

"Yes, sir," said Catterton. "On that night, through a transom window, I beheld the death of the woman known as Christine Averill. Then for a hundred dollars I agreed to deliver her child into Mr. Tremaine's hands. But on returning to the room, I found that the child was gone! Then, impelled by a sudden thought, I took my own baby sister, who was about the same age as the other infant—and like it, had light hair and blue eyes; dressed it in the clothes belonging to the other baby, that I found in the bureau drawer, and gave it to Mr. Tremaine as the infant of the dead woman. I knew that he could not discover the deception, for he knew not the infant he sought had been marked by the lightning. I wished to save my orphaned sister from the life of misery that lay before her."

As the stranger had anticipated, the blow had been warded off.

"Now, one thing more," said Tremaine, in a tone of calm unconcern, "can you tell me what was the fate of my child, the true Essie?"

"Yes," and a fierce gleam was in the eyes of the stranger as he spoke, "your child was carried by the ruffians, who stole her from Averill, to their den, and there she soon sickened and died!"

"This was the girl marked by the ace of spades, my daughter?"

"Yes."

"Bring her in," simply said Tremaine to Catterton.

The young man opened the sliding doors, and Iola, followed by Essie and Oswald, entered the room. Tremaine took out his penknife and approached Iola. The stranger looked on in astonishment.

"Where?" Tremaine asked.

"Here," answered Iola, placing her hand on her left shoulder.

Tremaine, with the penknife, cut the dress on the shoulder, at the place indicated by the finger of the girl, and exposed to view the polished white skin on which, in purple tints, was stamped the ace of spades.

The stranger uttered a cry of despair.

"You see!" exclaimed Tremaine, "my daughter is not dead, for she is here," and fondly he put his arm around the girl.

"The rough deceived me!" muttered Brown, to himself, between his teeth. But he was wrong, for it was English Bill himself who had been deceived. He had spoken what he thought was the truth. Bill's wife had deceived him; it was his own child that had died, and the poor woman, feeling pity for the helpless babe that was left, and knowing that an infant was the only protection against the assaults of her brutal husband, concealed the truth, and told him that it was the strange baby that had died instead of her own.

Iola discovered the truth, as to her birth, when she listened to the interview between Bill and the strange gentleman in the old house on Fortieth street. When they spoke of the child marked on the shoulder with the ace of spades, she knew that she was that child; although, of course, she had no idea who her parents were. But after her escape from the "Dew Drop," the next morning, she told the "Marquis" of the discovery that she had made, and he, with the knowledge that he already possessed of the affair, held the keys to the whole mystery. He instantly informed Iola who and what she was, and of the death of her mother, and that she had a living father in Loyal Tremaine. It was this knowledge that had made the "Marquis" willing to release her from her promise to him, for now of course she would be wealthy, though not legally her father's heir.

Catterton had taken her to Tremaine's house, told her story, made glad the heart of the father with a new-found daughter, and gave hope and happiness to Oswald and Essie, who now could enjoy their love without fear.

And together Tremaine and the "Marquis" had planned the trap that they had so unexpectedly sprung upon the stranger.

"You see, sir, I am better informed in regard to this matter than you are," said Tremaine. "As for Essie, after I had received the child on that night, I took a midnight train to Troy and placed her in safety."

The stranger answered not, but turned on his heel to depart.

"And now may I ask why you have taken such an interest in my affairs, and how you gained your knowledge respecting the infancy of this girl, my daughter?" asked Tremaine.

"I sailed in the same ship with Walter Averill—I met him in New York, and he told me what I have told you," said the stranger, in his cold, unnatural voice. "As to the interest I have manifested, I imagined that I, in possessing this secret, possessed a hold upon you. You are wealthy; probably my object was to force you to purchase my silence; or in plainer words, to blackmail you," and the stranger opened the door.

"One word more!" cried Tremaine. "Is Walter Averill alive, and if so where is he? I wish to see him—I wish on my bended knees to humble myself before him—to ask him to for-

give me for the wrong that I did him years ago, and to confess to him the misery and remorse that has filled my heart, and made my life wretched on account of that crime." If ever heartfelt repentance spoke in the voice, and shone in the features, then Loyal Tremaine expressed it in his tone and face.

"And do you think he would forgive you, even though you groveled in the dust at his feet? forgive you for having ruined his entire life?" said the stranger, bitterly. "Forgiveness is a divine virtue; men are earthly in nature—some possess it not. Walter Averill is dead." And the stranger left the house.

"His face is very familiar to me," said Tremaine, thoughtfully, "and yet I cannot remember that I have ever seen him before."

The "Marquis" kept his own counsel, although the thought was in his mind that he could speak the stranger's name had he willed—for he felt sure that he knew the man, although the hand of time had changed him greatly.

All was now joy in the Tremaine mansion. After a long night of darkness, the light had come.

Tremaine gladly gave his consent to the marriages of Oswald and Essie and the "Marquis" and Iola. The girls did not change their first names, for, as Tremaine remarked, it was "altogether too late in the day for them to assume new ones."

Within a month from the time of the discovery of Iola's birth, and the events we have just related, Grace church witnessed a double wedding, Oswald Tremaine to Essie Catterton, and Daniel Catterton to Iola Tremaine—for Iola had been legally adopted by Loyal.

The wedding created quite a sensation, for as Mr. Brown, the affable sexton of Grace church, remarked:

"As handsome couples as I want to see!" And Brown is universally acknowledged to be a judge in such matters.

English Bill was not seriously hurt by the blow from the pitcher, and was soon seen around his usual haunts as ugly as ever.

The "Marquis" sent him a letter containing the full particulars regarding Iola's discovery of her parents, closing with an intimation that if he (Bill) made the least attempt in the future to renew his designs upon Iola's liberty, he would be provided with snug quarters up the river (Sing Sing prison), where he would have plenty of time to reflect upon the evil of his ways.

Bill read the letter with a storm of curses.

"I might have know'd that the little devil wasn't my kid from the temper she had. If I had only know'd who she was, wot a big stake I might have made out of her."

But Bill took the hint about Sing Sing.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAST OF WALTER AVERILL.

ABOUT a month from the time that the double wedding took place, that we described in our last chapter, Dick Cranston, the detective, descended from his office, and strolled down Broadway.

It was in the middle of the afternoon, the day was warm and pleasant, and the streets were full of people, that the beautiful weather had enticed forth from their dark cages, misnamed dwelling-places, that abound in all great cities.

Cranston, with his keen eyes on the look-out for acquaintances, walked leisurely onward.

Just before reaching Canal street he saw a familiar face in a little knot of people approaching. It was the face of the stranger with whom the detective had had business relations, and who had called himself Alfred Brown.

The eyes of Mr. Brown were gleaming with a strange, unnatural look, as he hurried past the detective, without returning his bow, or apparently seeing him at all.

"Blessed if he don't look more like a madman now than ever," muttered Cranston, as he noticed the strange light that gleamed from the stranger's eyes.

Then a little crowd of people on the lower corner of Canal street attracted the attention of the detective.

"Something's up!" he exclaimed, as he quickly elbowed his way through the crowd.

The detective found that the crowd was gathered around a fallen man, clad in black broad-cloth—evidently a gentleman, by his garb.

"Carry him into the drug store," exclaimed Cranston, raising the apparently senseless man.

Assisted by some others of the crowd, the fainting man was carried into the drug store, and as Cranston assisted to place him on a lounge, in the back of the store, he recognized him at once, for the injured man was well known to him.

"Why, it's Mr. Tremaine, of Fifth avenue!" he cried, and then happening to look at his arm, which had supported the body of Tremaine, he saw that the coat-sleeve was stained with blood.

"My God!" he cried, in alarm, as his eye fell upon the blood, "he has been murdered!"

A doctor, who had formed one of the crowd, proposed to examine the body, and see the nature of the wound.

The coat was hastily taken off, then the vest removed. The shirt, stained with blood, plainly showed where the fatal blow had been dealt. A single straight thrust in the back, close to the spine.

"A powerful, muscular man must have given this blow, and he knew exactly where to strike. Death must have followed the blow almost instantly," said the doctor, when he had finished his examination.

And thus Loyal Tremaine met his death. Struck down by the hand of an unknown assassin in the open street, in the broad glare of the sunlight; the street, Broadway, crowded with people, and yet no more trace of the assassin that had struck the fatal blow than if he had sunk into earth, or melted into the air, after dealing the death-stroke.

This is no fiction, reader; the death that we have described took place as we have described it, in the same spot, and at the same hour, yet to this day, the murderer has not been discovered. The old adage that "murder will out," is oft proved to be a false one in our modern days.

The body of Tremaine was borne to his house, and then, after a few days, deposited in his long home, beautiful Greenwood, the City of the Dead, there to rest till the last trumpet should wake him, to sleep no more.

Not the slightest clew to the murderer of Loyal Tremaine could be found. A reward of a thousand dollars was offered by the mayor of the city, another thousand by the afflicted family of the dead man, and the detectives left no stone unturned to find some clew to the assassin. But it was all in vain; and the next tragedy turned the attention of the public from the affair. It was soon forgotten by all, save the family who mourned a father lost.

About a week after Tremaine's death, Doctor Dornton, in company with some of his professional brethren, had occasion to visit the lunatic asylum on Blackwell's Island.

After the Doctor had finished his examination, and was about to depart, one of the attendants, happening to remember, suddenly said:

"By the way, doctor, we've got a new patient here who mentions your name very frequently, in his ravings. I think he's been under your care at some time."

"Ah, well, I'd like to see him," replied the doctor.

So Dornton was conducted to the bed of the man who in his madness had spoken his name.

"What is the matter with him?" asked the doctor, as they approached the bed in which lay the patient.

"Brain fever," replied the attendant; "he has sustained a fracture of the skull—not recently, for the wound is completely healed, but evidently some years ago. It probably affected the brain, though, and some recent excitement has produced this attack."

The doctor stood by the side of the bed, and looked upon the sick man. To his utter astonishment, he discovered that the patient was no other than the man he had known as James Whitehead, the secretary of Loyal Tremaine.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the doctor, in astonishment, "can it be possible?"

The man's face had changed greatly since the doctor last looked upon it. Before it was pale and careworn, but now it was the face of a corpse. The thin white hair straying around the forehead gave it a ghastly look.

"Who brought him here?" asked the doctor.

"The police. They picked him up insensible, I believe, in Thirtieth street. The strangest thing about it was that he had on a black wig. It was the most natural one that I ever saw; it made him look like a man of forty. He's evidently been a sailor in his young days, for there's a small anchor in India ink on his arm."

"Is he likely to live?"

"No; I didn't think he would survive the night."

Then the sick man opened his eyes—the great, staring black eyes, that glared so wildly around. He turned convulsively in the bed, as if in agony.

"He is dying!" cried Dornton. The practiced eye of the physician saw the approach of death.

The dying man gasped convulsively in his agony, his lips moved and uttered a single word—the doctor's listening ears caught that word—then with a slight groan, the soul of the sick man—Walter Averill—took its flight to another world.

The sailor husband—the avenger of his wrong—Alfred Brown, the human blood-hound—died with a word upon his lips, and that word was a woman's name—it was:

"Christine!"

THE END

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